AN ANTIDOTE

Against a Careless

Indifferency in Matters of

RELIGION:

BEING A

TREATISE

In Opposition to Those that believe,

That All Religions are Indifferent;

AND,

That it imports not what Men Profess.

Wherein the Vulgar Objections of Atheists, Deists, Scepticks, Libertines, Latitudinarians, *&c.* are briefly Answered.

WITH

An INTRODUCTION,

By the late Reverend

ANTHONY HORNECK, D.D.

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The Introduction.

WHile *there is a* City of God, *and a* City of the Devil, *a* Kingdom of Light, *and a* Kingdom of Darkneſs, *we muſt expect, that Truth and Virtue will be oppoſed by Sin and Falſhood; and the more important any Truth is, the greater oppoſition it will meet with from the* Inſtruments of Unrighteouſneſs.

He that reads the Hiſtory of the Church, will find how in every Age, one or other hath ſtarted up to bark againſt the Light; and even then, when Miracles ſhined, and Wonders were freſh, and Signs from Heaven accompanied the Doctrine, falſe Apoſtles transformed ſometimes into Angels of Light, have riſen, to undermine the Structure.

There is not an Article of our Faith, but what hath been contradicted, and there is nothing ſo Sacred, but the Enemy of Mankind hath found out Perſons to ſerve him in the polluting it. Nor muſt we wonder to find Truth aſſaulted, and its Beauty in danger of being ſullied. It would not look ſo Glorious, if it were not reſiſted; and its Brightneſs doth, in a great meaſure, riſe, from the Quiver that rattles againſt it, *from* the glittering Spear and the Shield. *The Darts thrown againſt it, ſhew its Worth, and the Rage of Enemies diſcovers its ineſtimable Value; the price of the Treaſure is enhanced by the practices of Thieves, and that there are thoſe, who attempt the*

stealing of it, raises an Appetite and Greediness in others, to embrace and keep it.

Indeed, Truth like a Tree, runs out into various Branches, some whereof may be better spared than others; and though to cut the least Sprig is dangerous and injurious, yet, as in Human Bodies, a Wound in the Arm is not so pernicious as in the Bowels, and there is a vast difference between an accidental Head-ach, and a Disease that encroaches upon the Vitals; so while the lesser Boughs of Truth are marred, though it may be the cause of just Grief, yet we can exercise that piece of Charity, which beareth all things; *but it is enough to put us out of patience, to see the Heart of the Tree level'd at, and the Sap that feeds and gives it Life, in danger of being dried up.*

Such is the degeneracy of the Age we live in, that the very Fundamentals of Religion are struck at; and though Modesty was never any Quality of the Devil, except it were in order to Deceive, yet his Boldness at this time seems to step out of the common Road; and though Practical Atheism *hath been the Stratagem he hath made use of all along, yet his grand Endeavour now, and of late Years, is to lead Men into* Speculative: *And we see it hath so far prevail'd with abundance of Men, that they are grown very* Indifferent, *whether they believe any thing at all concerning God or Religion.*

As there is no Errour but what Men pretend to give some Reason for; so it's like the Lukewarmness of some, the horrid Debauchery of others, the Divisions that are among Christians, and the Animosities of one Party against another, and I will be bold to mention the late Revolution too, or rather the

Miscon-

Misconstruction of it, may be alledged, as causes of this Indifferency. *But where Men will not be at the pains of separating the Dross from the Gold, and are loth to distinguish the ill Digestion from the Goodness of the Food, or are for rejecting the use of things, because they are managed ill by Persons who Idolize their Interest, or, which is as bad, from the irregularity of Practice, infer a falsity of Doctrine; they must necessarily run into strange Conceits, and make that an Argument of Unbelief, which should engage them to a stricter Enquiry.*

We may justly look upon it, as a special Act of God's Providence, as Weeds do grow, still to raise up Men to root them up, and to oppose the spreading Infection by suitable Antidotes. This he doth, though few take notice of it, that he may not leave himself without witness, and to render those who are willingly catcht with these deceitful Baits, inexcusable. Indeed it is not every Excuse will take with an All-intelligent Being; and for People to pretend, that they cannot be satisfied in the great Principles of Religion, which are to make them good, and serviceable to God and Man, either because of the different Opinions about them, or because of the ill use that some make of them, or because it is hard to know the Truth, is a frivolous Plea, when we see they are more inquisitive after things which make against Religion, than after that, which can be said for it, and wilfully neglect perusing, and considering Books, which assert and vindicate the power of it, and greedily swallow the froth of witty Men, spew'd out against its force and energy. Since Atheism and Indifferency *have made those incursions upon us, which to our sorrow we behold, many*

admirable Treatises have come forth to baffle its pretences. But these are very carefully shown'd by the looser sort; or if any such be put into their hands, they are rejected with a Laugh, and a merry Jest takes with them more than the most judicious Reasonings.

So fond are Men of ruining themselves, and scrape together what Trash they can, to fortifie themselves against substantial Goodness. However, God is kind, in affording them Helps to free themselves from the Devil's Snares; and if those Helps be wilfully rejected, it is soon guessed at whose door their Destruction will lie.

Truth shall triumph at last, and all the prophane Herd shall find, when it is too late, it may be, they had a God to deal with, that will not be mocked. Since nothing can satisfie them but experience of God's Justice, they shall find it to their cost, and by intolerable anguish of Mind, be convinc'd of that which they would not be perswaded to believe, by the clearest Reason.

Good Lord! that there should be a necessity of taking pains to perswade Men that they are not Beasts, and that their Reason, Capacities, and Powers of their Souls, require something more than Eating and Drinking, and Sleeping, and minding their Business, and Pleasures in the World! This hath been so fully demonstrated by Wise and Considerate Men, that one would think there should be no room left for Subterfuges and Evasions; and as such Persons justly have thought they could not employ their Talents better, than in asserting the strong Foundation of Religion, so they deserve Eternal Commendations, for letting the World see, that whatever Attempts have been made

made to ruin it, its Pillars, like that of the Earth are unmovable, and its Notions so rivetted into our Natures, that we must first deny our Being, before we can deny its Principles.

The same I may say of the Author of these Papers, who observing the strange Indifferency that is abroad in the World, hath endeavour'd to dash that Child against the stones. His Arguments are strong, and weighty, and his Answers to the Cavils and Exceptions of Atheistical Men, short, but pithy, and such as may satisfie Men, who have not totally abandon'd the Dictates of Right Reason.

Religion is a thing fitted to our Reason, and the more our Reason is employ'd about it, the more its Necessity, and Beauty, and Glory will appear. That Men are so Indifferent about it, the principal cause is, because rational Consideration is excluded, and they are guided more by their Senses than their Reason. They are for the most part brought up, and educated in Sensuality; and whatever gratifies their Senses, is made the darling Object of their Love; and because Religion lays a restraint upon the sensual Appetite, they are very willing to entertain Prejudices against it, and any little exception serves as an Argument against submitting to the Holy Laws of it. The deeper root this Sensuality takes, the more Religion is weakened, and thrust out, till in time the common Principles of it are question'd, and at last, if it may be done with safety, as to the Law of the Land, denied.

'Tis love to Vice that corrupts Men's Understandings; and if we examin and search into the root of all, it will be found that this Indifferency in matters of Religion, proceeds from men's being addicted

to some Sin or other they are loth to part with; and because the stricter Rules of Religion are inconsistent with their unbridled Lusts, they think it their Interest to abandon it; or if they retain any thing of it it is only a shadow, and no more.

There is nothing so bad, but may be colour'd over with specious Arguments, and unthinking Men are soon gravell'd with such kind of Objections, especially, if the byass be toward evil; for then a very weak Argument will draw, and what it wants in strength, is made up by the power of a vicious Inclination. This gives it weight, and makes that conclusive, which at other times would scarce deserve a moment of serious Consideration.

That I recommend the perusal of this Book, is not so much to gratifie the Book-seller, as to promote the Publick Good; The Work is useful, and may help to reform the Times, and put a stop to the growth of Licentiousness. The meaneſt Reader may benefit himself by it; and it will furnish him with Answers to the vulgar Objections of Libertines. *The smallness of its bulk will be an encouragement to look it over; and the solid Reasons made use of, will, by the Blessing of God, convince him there is something more in Religion than* Fancy,

A. HORNECK.

The PREFAEE.

THere are so many People now-a-days, who believe, that all Religions are Indifferent, that 'tis not a thing to be wonder'd at; If something in Opposition to such a growing Mischief should be written upon this Subject. But we cannot forbear to observe, that there are five sorts of Persons who uphold this Indifferency.

1. There are some who do it purely out of Affection to Libertinism, and because that naturally they love to be Independent. They will not acknowledge any Master over 'em, to the end they may be able to say, believe, and do whatever they please, without fearing to give an account hereafter.

2. Others there are who do it out of Vanity, to the end they may be thought to be Wits of the First Order, that disdain to herd with those that follow the Common Opinion. And these People at first are but weakly convinc'd of what they say; but by publishing continually their singular Sentiments, they come to be fully persuaded of the Truth of 'em at last, and haughtily set themselves in the Rank of the People disabus'd, looking with pity upon the rest of the World, that are scar'd with the thoughts of Futurity.

3. There are some who do it out of Sloth; because they will not give themselves the trouble of examining Religions: So that they suffer themselves to be easily surprized by the Reasons of our pretended *Soaring Wits*; finding themselves by that means delivered from the Care they ought to take in a more diligent and laborious Scrutiny.

4. Others uphold this Opinion because they find it very convenient for preserving their Estates and their Honours, which they prefer before Truth, and love beyond all things in the World.

5. There are some who do it, not because they believe all Religions to be Indifferent, but because they have peculiar Sentiments of Religion, which they dare not sow abroad until they have insinuated, that 'tis a very Indifferent thing what Men believe, that they may not offend 'em with their Opinions.

That which is most to be lamented is this, that these wild Opinions very much corrupt and taint others, which they do with so much the less trouble, 1. Because that naturally we love Liberty, and we would willingly be Independent. 2. Because we are puff'd up with Pride, and that there is nothing that pleases us so much as to be distinguish'd from others. 3. Because Labour dislikes us, and for that we love not that which puts us to any hardship. 4. Because we have too great an Affection for our Wealth, and for that it is a great trouble to us to quit the Pleasures and comfortable Conveniencies of this Life. There is nothing left unessay'd to surprize those pious Souls that seek to work out their Salvation.

There

There is great care taken to make 'em understand, that they ought to make Christian Morality their ſtudy, and that there is nothing but Morality to be preach'd up, They tell us, that we have need to be corrected and reproved; that the greateſt part of Men ſufficiently know the Will of God, but that few practiſe it. This is agreed; but the chief Aim of thoſe who thus diſcourſe, is artificially to inſinuate, that there is no neceſſity of tormenting our ſelves about what we ought to believe; only that we ought to live well. And thus they prepare People inſenſibly to believe, that all Religions are Indifferent, However, we muſt acknowledge, that thoſe who are of this Opinion are not all alike corrupt; but yet they are ſufficiently erroneous for us to deplore the Misfortunes of this Age. 'Tis for the Faithful to fortifie themſelves againſt thoſe Deluſions, that we have undertaken this Treatiſe, and with an endeavour to re-call thoſe that are gone aſtray. This is the only aim that we have propoſed to our ſelves, and not to get the Reputation of an Author. We conjure all thoſe that read this Little Manual, to ſtrive with themſelves, and to read it with Application. We beſeech 'em not to read it with a Libertine's Humour that ſcoffs at every thing, but with a deſire to ſearch out the Truth, and with the ſame diligence that they ſtudy Human Societies. Let 'em conſider,

1. That the diſpute is not here about a thing of little Importance, ſince it concerns their being eternally miſerable, if they are deceiv'd, as we ſhall make appear in this Treatiſe,

2. Let

2. Let 'em not reject what we shall say, under pretence of meeting with Reasons that are not fully convincing. For though there were but one good Reason in a Chapter, 'twere enough to oblige 'em to return from their Wandrings.

3. That they ought not to despise the Arguments, under pretence that they have heard 'em several times; but let 'em carefully examine 'em, and lay aside their Prejudices.

4. Lastly, That it is not enough to find some petty Fault, to reject the Reasons which are produced; for that there is nothing so easie as to oppose some little Sophisms to good Arguments. But let 'em consult their own Consciences: I most heartily beseech Almighty God to give a Blessing to my weak Endeavours.

A TREATISE

Against those that believe, that all Religions are Indifferent.

CHAP. I.

Wherein, after we have supposed that there is a God, we shew that God is most perfect: That he is the Author of all the Good which is in the Creatures, and that we ought to Fear and Honour him.

THE Being of a God is a Truth so evident, that no Man can deny it, without combating his own Reason. There's no necessity of straining our Endeavours to believe it; for that Man must put a Violence upon himself, who dares to contradict it. For proof of it, there is no need of rommaging for metaphysical, high-flown, far-fetch'd Arguments; scarcely within the Reach

Reach of most Men's Understanding. The Consideration of this same spacious Universe expos'd to our Eyes, and all the Creatures we behold within it, together with the Correspondency, the Symmetry and Relation of the several innumerable Parts of the Whole, is sufficient to convince all People that will listen to their Reason. For as for those that are not struck with the sensible Marks which the Author of Nature has imprinted on his Works, they will never submit to the Force of Dispute. The most Eloquent, and most Learned of the *Romans was so over-rul'd by this particular Proof, that he makes no scruple to maintain, after a great Philosopher, that if Men should of a sudden start up from under the Earth, where they had remain'd in Darkness from the Time of their Birth, and all at once behold the Land, the Sea, and Heavens; the Beauty, the vast Body and wonderful Effects of the Sun, they would not fail to acknowledge a Deity, and to confess that the whole which they contemplated was the Workmanship of a God.

* *Cic. l. 2. Nat. Deorum.*

In short, either we must believe that the Matter is Eternal, or that the World is the Effect of Chance; or else we must acknowledge that there is an All-powerful Being, which made both the one and the other. Now it cannot be said, that a dead and insensible Mass such as was the Matter, is an Eternal Being, and without any Beginning, because it would be the greatest of all Absurdities to ascribe to the Vilest of all Beings, the Chiefest of all Perfections, which is to exist of

of it ſelf. Beſides, in regard that Motion is not Eſſential to the Matter, tho' it ſhould be ſuppos'd to be Eternal, we ſhould be ſtill putting the Queſtion, When it began to have Motion? Who it was that gave it the firſt Impreſſions? Who it was that ſhap'd it into ſo many various Figures? Who made this Motion ſo juſt and regular; and who it was that produc'd ſuch an infinite variety of Creatures out of one and the ſame Matter? So that when all is done, we muſt come to one Sovereign Being, which we call GOD.

It cannot be ſaid, that this vaſt Univerſe is the Effect of Chance, or that it was the accidental Meeting of certain little Bodies which produc'd it. The Pagan Philoſopher who maintain'd this Opinion, That Nature muſter'd together all the Atoms of her Wiſdom to compoſe it, ſeems to me no leſs Extravagant in this particular than he, who beholding ſeveral Pictures, wherein were to be obſerv'd all the Rules of Exact and Elaborate Painting, and a great number of Figures curiouſly drawn, ſhould ſay, that it was the Workmanſhip of Chance, or that the Colours mix'd ſo artfully together of themſelves.

What Man of ſound Judgment can be ſo vain to think, that it was *Chance* that made the *Whole* which we contemplate, the Heavens, the Earth, the Sun, the Stars, the Plants and Animals; That it was *Chance*, that in the Wombs of our Mothers form'd a Piece of Workmanſhip ſo perfect as that of our Bodies, whoſe Structure, Figure, Organs, Members, their wonderful Symmetry and juſt Proportion, is ſtill the Admiration of

Human

Human Wisdom: That it was *Chance* which produc'd our Souls; that Soul which thinks, which raises it self above our Senses, and which corrects and governs 'em; that searches after, invents and finds out, those things that seem'd impossible for Human Reach. Lastly, that it was *Chance*, which united this Soul so perfectly with the Body, that such and such Motions of the Body stir up Thoughts in the Soul, and such and such Thoughts of the Soul which produce variety of Motions in the Body. Certainly we must no longer pretend to make use of our Reason, if we once deny these to be the Works of an All-powerful, most Wise, All-understanding, and most perfect Being.

So that I shall not undertake to refute those, who in defence of *Epicurus*, adventure to bring some Examples of what *Chance* is able to perform. For there is so little proportion between what they alledge, and the Creatures which we speak of, that 'tis a wonder that People who pretend to Wit, should employ it in such feeble Proofs. I might as easily prove, that because it so happens, that three or four Letters might be so thrown together by chance, as to form a Word; a Man might as easily make a Poem as accomplish'd as *Virgil*'s *Æneids*. Nay, tho' I should grant that *Chance* might form some one of those Creatures which we every day admire; shall we from thence infer, that it was *Chance* that so well order'd all things, as to prescribe to every thing the particular Use that is assign'd it, or that so well join'd and plac'd together all things, as to be useful the one to the other, the Heavens to the

the Earth, the Earth to the Plants, the Plants to the Creatures? Tho' *Chance* might frame an Eye, how is it possible for us to conceive, that *Chance* also made the Light, without which, the Eyes would signifie nothing?

Seeing then that Matter is not Eternal, and that the World was not made of it self, either by *Chance* or the concurrence of Atoms, according to *Epicurus*, of necessity we must conclude, that there is an Almighty Being that made it, since nothing but an Infinite Power could draw the first Matter out of nothing, or give it so lovely a Form, And this All-Powerful Being is that which we call God.

It may be objected perhaps, that Nature is the cause of all those great Effects; 'tis she, say they, that causes the Plants to sprout and shoot forth, that gives Life to Men, &c. But all this while, what do they mean by Nature? Is it an Intelligent Cause, or a Blind and Stupid Cause? If it be a Stupid Cause, how comes it to act with so much Wisdom? If it be an Intelligent Cause, endu'd with Infinite Wisdom, is not this the calling of Nature that which we call God? Or if they mean by Nature, that Order which appears in the Production, Generation, and Preservation of every Creature; then who establish'd that Order, but that Sovereign Being which we all adore?

'Tis then most certain that there is a God; and we have no design to enlarge any farther upon the proof of it. All Sciences lead us to this Truth, and all Nations in all Ages have acknowledg'd it, except some certain barbarous People among whom

whom Reason was almoſt extinguiſh'd; and in ſome, Travellers have not obſerv'd any Sentiments of a Deity, becauſe they have not been ſo ſtrictly nice to inform themſelves. But Man, who is naturally proud and high-minded, has rather choſen to worſhip Wood and Stones, Beaſts and Plants, Crocodiles and Trees, Rats and Onions, than to be without a God, and adore nothing at all. However, we muſt confeſs, that there were formerly, and ſtill are now-a-days, ſome People, who making an ill uſe of their Reaſon, attack this Principle, and drawing off their Wit from every thing that might be able to prove a Deity, wearily to apply themſelves to whatever may increaſe and harden 'em in their Doubts, perſuade themſelves at length, that there is no God. But beſides, that they who arrive to this degree of Impiety, are not very numerous and that there is great reaſon to queſtion, whether there be any real Atheiſts; I ſpeak of Atheiſts in Wit, if I may preſume ſo expreſs my ſelf, and not of Atheiſts in Heart, there are very few who carry their Incredulity to their Grave. The greateſt part confeſs, in deſpite of their own Teeth, the Deity, whoſe Enemies they declare themſelves to be; nor can they forbear imploring his Aid in their moſt preſſing occaſions, and upon unexpected Accidents; Neceſſity and their Conſcience forcing 'em to acknowledge, what before, out of malice and diſdain of Heaven, they deny'd. Therefore the Impiety of ſome Libertines, who endeavour to prove there is no God, becauſe they could wiſh there were not, ought not to be any inducement for us to

to queſtion a Verity ſo univerſally acknowledg'd.

But if it behoves our Reaſon, as Haughty as it is, to confeſs a Deity, and that Man has a Maſter, under whoſe Empire it becomes him to humble himſelf; it becomes him alſo to acknowledge that this Sovereign Power poſſeſſes all Perfections, and thoſe in ſuch a degree, as that there can be none conceiv'd to be greater or more accompliſh'd.

This is the *Idea* which we naturally have of God; nor can we have any other, if we follow the Illuminations of Right Reaſon, Nothing is to be conceiv'd to be better, or more perfect than the Deity; and this is agreed on by all the World. For if he wanted ſome Perfection, or if he did not poſſeſs it in a ſupreme degree, then would ſomething be conceiv'd more perfect than He. Therefore it muſt be own'd, that whoever ſpeaks of a God, ſpeaks of the moſt perfect of all Beings, that exiſt or can exiſt.

I will not undertake to deſcribe all theſe Perfections; they are infinite: Nor can the Angels themſelves, thoſe Bleſſed Exiſtencies, who are always before this Sovereign Being, but very imperfectly inſtruct us who he is. 'Tis ſufficient that we obſerve, that no Man can have an *Idea* of a moſt Perfect Being, without conceiving at the ſame time, that he ſubſiſts of himſelf, and neceſſarily exiſts; that he is an Eternal Being, and without any Beginning: That he is an Independent Being, but upon whom all things depend; an All-ſeeing, All-knowing, All-foreſeeing, and Omnipotent Exiſtence. A Being Sovereignly Good,

Good, most Just, most Wise, and most Happy: Thus it behoves us to conceive all these Perfections in the Being which we adore, and who is our God.

This is a Truth beyond all Contest: But it is also no less certain, that this most perfect Being, who created the Matter, the World, and whatever we behold contain'd within it, is the Author of all the Good which is in the Creatures. All the Creatures can expect no good, but from him who gave 'em their Being, and by whom they subsist. There is none but he who perfectly knows what is convenient for 'em, because he knows all things; and He alone can only bestow it upon 'em, by reason of his Omnipotency. The Pagans have acknowledg'd this, in the midst of their Ignorance, as it would be easie for me to prove out of the Works of their most celebrated Authors. They all agreed, that their Lives and their good Fortune (for that was their manner of speaking) depended upon God. *This is the Opinion of all Men*, said *Cicero*: For I mind not what *Ajax* says in *Sophocles*, and another no less impious in *Eschylus*, who upheld, that none but Fools and faint-hearted People implor'd the Omnipotency of the Gods. But there have been others who have added, that Wisdom and Virtue depended upon this Supreme Being; that the Beginning and End, or the success of all Things depended upon him: And the Emperour *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* has those Sentiments upon this Subject, as put to shame several false Christians. For he says, that there is an effectual Virtue in God, which acts in us, and operates all our good Actions,

Actions, and all our good Desires, and which removes from us all Opportunities and Occasions of falling into Sin.

From all these Truths I draw this Consequence, which naturally flows from these Principles; That it is absolutely our Duty to Honour this Infinite Being, to endeavour from day to day to understand him more perfectly, continually to admire his Virtues, to love and fear him, to make it our whole Employment to please him, and so to bear our selves, that whatever we are, whatever we do, whatever we have, may be all order'd to his Glory. For let us but grant that there is a God in the World; that this God is most perfect; that he is supremely Good, and that he is the Author of all the Good which we enjoy, and of all that we can hope for; certainly we cannot then forbear to admire his Perfections but must believe our selves engag'd and bound to love him. Let us but acknowledge that this God is Omnipotent, and that it is in his Power to reduce all the Creatures he has made, into their Primitive Dust, and that he is able eternally to punish those who violate his Laws, we must be then assuredly convinc'd, that he is to be fear'd, and we ought not to provoke his Wrath. Let us be perswaded that this God is most just, that he loves Justice, and that whatever he exacts from us, tends only to make us happy, and is nothing but what is most comfortable to our real Interests, it creates a Pleasure in us to obey him, and be submissive to his Will. Let us once be sensible, that this God is both able and willing to redress all our Complaints, to deliver us

out of all our Miseries, and that all things depend upon his Conduct and Direction, it presently persuades us to a sole Reliance upon him. Lastly, let us believe that this God is most Wise; that he created Man for those Ends which are most worthy of him, and we can never question but that Men are bound to pursue those Ends to which they are appointed, in making a right use of that Reason which they have receiv'd, and applying it to the Glory of him who gave it 'em. Now all these Acts of Veneration, Respect, Fear, Submission, Adoration, Admiration, Confidence, Obedience, and Love, are comprehended in the single Word *Religion*. So that the Idea and Knowledge of God, imports the Necessity of a Religion.

CHAP. II.

That Religion is not the Invention of Politicians.

THere are some People who maintain that Religion, as also the Opinion of a God, is the Invention of certain Politicians, who, as they suppose, made the People believe there is a Deity, on purpose to retain 'em in Submission and Obedience; that there is a certain Worship to be paid him; and that this Deity severely punishes the Treacherous, the Seditious, and Rebels.

But it will be no difficult thing to make out the absurdity of this Opinion to those who have any Love and Veneration for Truth. For to prove,

prove, that there were any Legiſlators, or any cunning Politicians, who made the People believe that there is a God, and that there is a neceſſity of a Religion, they muſt make it appear to us,

1. That before the Birth of thoſe Legiſlators, and Founders of States and Dominions, the People were ignorant that there was a God, and that they never paid him any Worſhip.

2. That thoſe Legiſlators never had themſelves any Fear or Sentiment of a Deity.

Now this is that which they will never be able to prove; neither do I believe they will ever preſume to undertake it. Let 'em inſtance any time wherein People liv'd without acknowledging a God. Let 'em tell us the Names of thoſe firſt Men, that were the Authors of that Opinion, that there is a Deity; at leaſt let 'em inſtruct us when thoſe Ages were, that it firſt began to be receiv'd in the World. 'Tis true, it cannot be deny'd but that there were ſome Politicians who have made advantageous uſe of this Firſt Notion, That there is a Being who is far Superiour to all thoſe which we behold, or of which we have any knowledge, as they have no leſs ſucceſsfully made uſe of the Vanity of the People, and that love which they naturally have for Liberty, their Lives, their Children, or whatever elſe belongs to 'em; and of this Number were *Jeroboam*, *Minos*, *Licurgus*, *Solon*, *Numa*, *Mahomet*, and ſome others famous in Hiſtory. I muſt acknowledge likewiſe, that theſe Legiſlators very much confirm'd the People in their Natural Propenſity to a Religion; in regard they had too much Wit to be Ignorant, that without Religion Society would dege-

degenerate into Common Robbery, since every one would then do what he pleas'd; the most Crafty would be the most Wise, and the most Powerful and Strongest would be always Masters. 'Tis most certain also that these Law-givers have made the People believe, that the Deity would be worshipp'd in such or such a Manner; and that they have introduc'd such Ceremonies as they thought most proper for their Designs. Nor will I scruple to agree, that there have been several who derided the Deities which the People ador'd, and who have made 'em pay their Adoration to what Deities they pleas'd. The thing was easie to be done in such places where the People were ignorant of the True God whom they were to serve. But I aver, that never any of those Legislators undertook to prove the Existence of a God. They took that Truth for granted, and built upon that Foundation. But they never prov'd it; and I am assured convinc'd, that if they had not met with it already engrav'd in the Hearts and Minds of all Men, they would never have succeeded in their Great Designs.

Is it a thing to be believ'd, that two or three Men could deceive the whole World, or that for the Establishment of their Authority, they could ever impose their own Inventions upon People as quick-sighted as themselves, that laugh'd at popular Errours, such as *Socrates*, *Plato*, or *Cicero*? Is it probale that they could have seduc'd and misled People who were not subjected to their Dominion: nay, People that commanded over others, to believe the Flatteries of those who would needs persuade 'em that their Law-

givers

givers and Princes were Gods, and whom indeed they worshipp'd as so many Deities? Is it possible an Opinion, originally no more than the Invention of some ambitious Persons, should be so deeply rooted in the Minds of all Men, that they could never eradicate it again, whatever efforts they made, when we find every day that Men renounce so many vulgar Errours, tho' suck'd in with their Infant-Milk?

Lastly, is there any appearance or likelihood that after so many Ages Men should never be convinc'd of an Opinion that disquiets and turmoils their Consciences with so many Terrours and Convulsions?

CHAP. III.

Of the Indifference of Religions.

'Tis clear then, that all Men have a natural Inclination to Religion, in regard that all have an Opinion that there is a God. Now if they all understood this Deity after one and the same manner, there would be but one Religion in the World. But their Ideas are so various, that there are almost as many Religions as there are People. From whence the Question has risen, Whether Men are equally acceptable to God, whatever Religion they profess? And whether they may be allow'd, as an Indifferent Thing, to be of any Religion? There are some People, and of these too many God knows, who believe that all Religions are Indifferent: That

the Chief Religion, is to be Obedient to the M
gistrates that Governs us; that God is in tr
the Centre to which all our Devotion ought
tend, but that it is of little Importance wh
way Men arrive at the Centre, provided th
get thither; and that there are several way
be happy. *Uno itinere non posse perveniri ad*
grande Secretum, according to *Symmachus*. T
we ought to be of the Religion of the People
mong whom we live, and not to tie our sel
to any one particular manner of serving G
but to be initiated into all sorts of Religio
Esse totius Mundi Sacrorum Antistitem, as a Pa
said. They who have given us Relations of
Belief of the *Siamois*, or People of *Siam*, repo
That they believe that God does not prefer
the World, but only for the sake of that Div
tisement and Pleasure which he takes in the
riety of Languages, Creatures, Habits, and R
gions; that the same Medley produces the sa
Effect as the Diversity of Flowers in a Gard
the difference of Meats at a Banquet, or
Distinction of Offices in a Prince's Palace;
that in like manner God delights himself w
inspiring into Mortals several manners of Ador
and Serving him; and that we ought to beli
'em all to be good, since they have all the sa
Object, and bring Man home to his last end.
also said, that the King of *Siam* made Answ
to the Person who propos'd to him, in the Na
of an Ambassador from a Great Prince, his tr
ing Christian, *That he wonder'd the Prince sho*
so much trouble himself in a Business relating to G
for which it did not appear that God did any
conc

concern himself, as having left it wholly to our Discretion. For, added he, *the True God, who Created Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures therein contained, and who has given 'em Natures and Inclinations so different, had he so pleas'd, at the same time, that he gave Men Bodies and Souls alike, could have infus'd into 'em the same Sentiments of the Religion which they were to profess, and have united all Nations under one Law. But,* continued he, *'tis obvious that Providence permits diversity of Sects and Opinions, because that God takes as much delight to be ador'd with different Forms of Worship and Ceremonies, as to be glorified by the Prodigious Variety of Creatures, whose sundry Beauties publish his Infinite Power.*

Now in regard there are too too many among those who call themselves Christians, who with Banners display'd, appear in defence of this Opinion, concerning the Indifferency of Religion, Our design is to combat 'em in the following Chapters. But first of all it behoves us to observe, that they who are of this Opinion, do not all uphold it after one and the same manner. There are some who deny Providence; others who will not have it to be concern'd in Matters of Religion. There are some who assert the Mortality of our Soul: Others aver, that to speak properly, there is no such thing as *True* or *False*, *Just* or *Unjust*; but that every thing depends upon the Will of Man. There are some who believe, that Truth lies still in Darkness, and that God has not reveal'd it; others, that he has reveal'd it, but so obscurely, that there is no Heresie which may not be prov'd by the

Word of God. Others maintain that Peace is to be preferr'd before Truth; and altogether cry up the great Good which would redound to the World from the Opinion of Indifferency in Religion. Were but this Opinion every-where receiv'd, they say, there would be no more War about Religion, nor any more Contentions about Mysteries of Faith. All Men would live together in perfect Unity, and this Lower World would be a Little Heaven. They extol the first Author of this Opinion, as one that never can be too highly applauded, and erect Monuments and Statues to honour his Memory. All Men, they cry, ought to give God continual Thanks for sending such a Man into the World, and at the same time are strangely troubled because he was not Immortal. Let us now see whether that Opinion merits so many Elogies, or rather whether it deserve not publick Execration. And to the end that none may have reason to complain, let us take all our *Indifferents* (for I beg the favour that I may have leave to call 'em so) one after another, and let us impartially examine what they hold forth.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Against those who deny a Providence.

I Shall begin with those, who, not daring to maintain that there is no God, yet presume to deny his Providence, and assent with *Epicurus*, that the Supream Deity never concerns Himself with what is acted upon Earth: That 'tis a thing beneath the Grandeur of a Sovereign Being, to take cognizance of the petty Affairs of Mortals here below; and so 'tis very indifferent to him of what Religion they are.

True it is, that altho' the Love which it behoves us to have for Truth, should always oblige us to tie our selves up to the Belief of that Opinion which is most conformable to our receiv'd Ideas of God; nevertheless it must be acknowledged, that if there were no Providence, we might conclude it needless for Man to torment himself about Religion; and deem it lawful enough to make choice of that which best agrees with our Interests, or with the Society with which we converse. But 'tis no difficult thing to refute this Opinion, which, with as good Reason might be call'd, *The Sponge of all Religions*, as a *Persian* Author once said the same thing of the *Fatality of the Stoicks*. Nor shall I make use of any more than two or three Arguments to overthrow it, without alledging any Passages out of Scripture, because I dispute with People that will not acknowledge it to be divinely inspir'd.

First, it must be acknowledg'd, that they who deny a Providence, never seriously consider what God is. The *Idea* which we naturally have of God, instructs us, that He is the most Perfect of all Beings that exist, or may exist, as already has been said. Now can we believe, that a God who should neglect his own Works, and should shut himself up in Heaven, without taking any care of what he has created, can be a Perfect Being, seeing that among Men themselves, those Persons have been always look'd upon with the highest Contempt who neglect their own Affairs. Fathers, for example, who never mind their own Children, and those slothful Princes who, like *Sardanapalus*, abandon the care of their Dominions, and leave their Subjects at liberty to do whatever seems good in their own eyes. How can such a sluggish Remissness, a Negligence so unbecoming an imperfect Creature, be thought to beseem the most Perfect of all Beings. At least it cannot be deny'd, but that if God takes no care of his Creatures, there must be a Being more perfect than he. But this is that which cannot be said of a God. *Either we must deny* (says *Cicero*, *l. Natur. Deor.*) *that there are Gods, or we must confess, that they act something Great and Noble: Now there is nothing Greater or more Noble than the Conduct of the World. Were it otherwise we should be forc'd to say, that there is something Better and more Perfect than the Deity.*

Besides, it is not to be imagin'd, that a most Wise Being has created so many Things which we admire, without proposing to himself some end or other. If he have made all these Things

to

whose some end, can we believe that he takes no
der care to see whether he have attain'd his End or
hav'n, and whether his Creatures do what they
fe ought to do. I know very well what *Epicurus*
ad said, that it would be a defect in the Felicity of
God, God, should he be troubled with the Manage-
ou ment of the World: But he was grosly mista-
an ken, as having a False *Idea* of Felicity. For
fe true Beatitude consists not in doing nothing, but
no in doing things both Great and Noble. A Being
th that is not Perfect, cannot be happy in a high de-
A gree, more especially if you speak of a Being
ind supreamly Wise. Now it cannot be imagin'd, that
ce a Being, who neglects the looking after what he
ei has taken pleasure to create, can be a perfect
ty *Being*. Therefore there might be some ground
es for *Epicurus*'s Argument, if God might be thought
li to tire himself with Governing the World. But
be how can he be weary who does all things by the
s, only Act of his Will, wherein his Almighty
ei Hand, that ne'er was tir'd in building the vast
g Structure, where all Beings are enclos'd, has not
h the least share of Pains or Trouble.

But if they who deny Providence, never consider what God is, neither did they ever consider the nature of the Creatures. Certain it is, that as they were created out of nothing, they would infallibly return to nothing again, if the same Hand that form'd 'em did not support and preserve 'em; for because they exist at this instant, it does not follow that they shall exist the next moment. 'Tis requisite then, that he who preserv'd 'em the first moment, should preserve 'em still; and this is so much the more necessary

for him to do, because there are a thousand Accidents that might every hour destroy 'em, were there not a Supream Being that preserves 'em. It is not the same thing with them as with God whose Essence at the same time implies Existency: for we may think of the Being of Creatures yet not suppose that they exist. Now if it be true, that the Creatures cannot subsist without being sustain'd by the same Hand that made 'em we must of necessity conclude from their subsisting, that there is a Providence.

We must be farther confirm'd in this Opinion if we consider the wonderful Order which is observ'd in all parts of the Universe, that never alters, but has subsisted for so many Ages in the midst of so many Changes and Revolutions: The Harmony and Concord of so many Creatures of different Natures; the regular Motions of those Great Bodies, that roll majestically over our Heads; their Changes so constant, their Conjunctions so just, their Revolutions so well order'd, together with a thousand things which are our continual wonder, yet, which we can never admire enough. For it is impossible to revolve this Order in our Minds, without acknowledging a Providence, unless we design'd to be as extravagant as he, who, observing a State well Govern'd, a Family well manag'd, or an Army under good Conduct and Discipline, should deny that State or Kingdom to be Govern'd by any Magistracy, that the Family had any body to look after it, or that the Army had any General or Chieftain to Command it.

They

They who deny a Providence extol themselves in this particular very much, and make some Objections. If it were true, say they, that all things were well regulated, we should believe that God concern'd himself with what is acted here below; but we observe so many Disorders in the World, that we cannot persuade our selves that a Being altogether Wise and Omnipotent should govern the Universe. Nay, 'twould be much better, add they, to affirm, that he takes no heed of what happens upon Earth, than to assert that he beholds and suffers so much Confusion. Whence comes it to pass that Thunder rattles in the Desarts, that Hail and Thunderbolts fall upon Rocks, and that it rains upon the Sea? To what purpose serve Flies, Worms, and other Insects? Whence comes it to pass that Mountains vomit forth Fire and Ashes? Wherefore are we pester'd with Monsters and Serpents? Were there a Providence, would it not hinder those Inundations, those Earthquakes that overturn and swallow up whole Cities; those Pestilences that lay waste whole Kingdoms, and those extraordinary Accidents that seem to menace the Universe with utter Ruin? Or would that Providence permit the Oppression of Virtue, and the Triumphs of Vice and Impiety?

But first I would fain know of those who make these Objections, whether they are well assur'd that what they call Disorder, be really Disorder, and what they say is badly manag'd, be truly the defect of Government? Did it never so fall out that they deceiv'd themselves, and have they not frequently blam'd the Conduct of Princes, while

they were ignorant of the Reasons, but admir
it afterwards when they understood the Groun
of their Proceedings. What a Rashness is it
mortal Men, whose Understandings are confin
within such narrow Bounds, to determine
positively of what they know not in the lea
and to believe there is Disorder in all things,
which they cannot reach the Causes? The Im
piety of those People to me, seems no less arr
gant than that of the King of *Castille*, who bo
sted that if God had call'd him to his Counc
when he fram'd the World, he could have giv
him better Advice. We know no more, sa
one of the most celebrated Writers of this Ag
the Designs of God in the Government of h
Creatures, than an Infant, who having been bre
up in a Desart, and all of a sudden brought int
some great and populous City, could be able t
understand all the Changes that would happe
without intermission, before his eyes. He woul
many times blame what was by no means to b
censur'd, because he could not understand th
Reason of those Alterations.

The cause why they so badly argue, proceed
from this, that they consider those Things which
appear to them so ill manag'd, disjunctively from
the other Works of God, and for that they do
not reflect with sufficient attention upon the Cor
respondency between those Things, and others
which they know. Wherein they are no less ri-
diculous than they, who content themselves with
only seeing some Scenes of a Dramatic Poem,
but never examin the Coherence and Unfolding,
or rather Winding up of the Whole; or they

who

who in Pictures only fix their Eyes upon the Shadows; or else like those, who in a piece of Tapistry-Work, look only upon the loose Bordering, which for the most part presents the Sight with only monstrous and imperfect Figures.

In the second place, I could wish, that they who find so many Disorders, and so much confusion upon the Earth, would tell me, Whether they meet with nothing that is rightly order'd? and, Whether they never obsérv'd any Characters of Wisdom in the Conduct of the World? They would not presume to aver it. Let 'em then tell me, by what means all those things which appear to them to be in decent Order, come to be so wisely manag'd? Certainly they must, at least in that respect, acknowledge that there is a Providence; and as to other Things, they ought to have as much Equity, as a Man of good Sense, when he judges of a Book that Treats of various Subjects, and which is written in several Languages, of which he understands but one part. If that which he understands pleases him, he imagins to himself, that what he understands not will be no less satisfactory to him, could he but dive into the sense of it. God would not conceal from Men, all the Ends for which he made all Things: But some he has not unveil'd, on purpose to exercise and humble their Reason, and that they might adore the impenetrable Depths of his Wisdom. We ought to extol him, says St. *Austin*, as well for what we know to be wonderful in his Works, as for what we cannot penetrate. For that our Life being

being of so short continuance, and we our selves confin'd within so small a part of Time, and of the Universe; 'tis impossible that we should comprehend the Order and Designs of that Eternal Wisdom, that views the vast Immensity of Time with one single Glance, and with linking together that infinite variety of the Events of this Life, like so many Rings clasp'd one within another, forms that long Chain of his Providence, that shall extend it self to the fartheſt succession of all Ages.

After these general Remarks, let us enter into the examination of these Disorders which they speak of. They wonder, in the first place, why Thunder rattles in uninhabited Desarts, that Hail falls upon Rocks; and why Lightning levels with the Ground high and large Trees; not minding that these are but the Consequences of the Laws which God has establish'd. I am as much to seek wherefore they do not likewise complain that the Sun shines upon, and warms those Desarts, because the Heat of the Sun exhales the Vapours and Exhalations which thicken into those Clouds that generate both Tempests and Lightning. They wonder why the Rain which serves to fertilize the Earth, falls not more regularly upon only Lands manur'd, and not upon High-ways; or upon the Seas, which have no need of it. But do they think that Rain has no other Effects, than only to render the Earth fruitful. Do they not know that the High-ways would crack and gape through Drought, were they not moisten'd by the Rain? And that it is a great Refreshment to those that travel in hot

hot Countries. *Should it only rain upon sown Lands,* says that famous Author already cited, *whence should proceed the Springs that are so necessary to quench our own, and the Thirst of all Creatures; and how should the Rivers retain that abundance of Water which renders 'em Navigable? It rains upon the Sea: Who says that Rain is there unprofitable to temper the Saltness of it, and to make it more wholsome for the nourishment of the Fish.*

They wonder that there should be Mountains cover'd with Snow, and others that vomit forth Fire, and there should be Desarts and steep Rocks. Not considering that their variety of Objects it is, which makes the Beauty of the Universe, and that God manifests his Wisdom more in that Diversity, than in a Uniformity, though grateful to the sight, yet still the same.

They wonder why there should be Insects, as if we could sufficiently admire the Wisdom of God in those little Animals; for example, in the little Republick of the Bees, which employ'd the Brains of an ancient Philosopher, for above Threescore years; and which at this day finds work enough for those that dive into the Secrets of Nature. Should we as diligently enquire into the Use of these little Insects, as into the Benefit of Simples, we should doubtless discover very profitable Secrets. I will not except the very Flies and Gnats, which are said to be useful to purifie the Air, in places where there are the greatest number of 'em, and where they are most troublesome, and give the greatest annoyance.

They admire there should be poisonous Serpents, and other venomous Beasts, but never consider

sider that there are many excellent Remedies extracted out of Serpents; and that Sovereign Antidotes are frequently made of compounded Poysons that serve to ease the Pains of Men; and that in general, all these things which he believes to be either superfluous or hurtful, would afford us matter of Admiration, if we consider'd 'em as we ought to do, and if we should find that in the general Harmony of the Creatures, they produce the same Effect as Bases and Trebles in a lovely Consort.

As for Monsters, most certain it is, that those petty Miscarriages and Deviations of Nature ought not to lessen the esteem, which it becomes us to have for Nature's Author; for that these Monsters no way render the World imperfect. On the contrary, this variety of Creatures, of which some are more perfect than others, contribute not a little to the Beauty of the Universe. Monstrous Animals are less perfect than others of their kind, whose Proportions are more just; but there are a thousand things which are to be admir'd in the Structure of deformed Bodies, which could only be the Handy-work of and Infinite Power. 'Tis with Monsters as with Discords in Musick, where oft-times a Discord artfully intermix'd with several Concords makes the sweetest Harmony. Besides, these Monsters are the Consequences of that Communication, which is between the Imagination of the Mother and the Fruits in her Womb; which Communication was most wisely establish'd for the forming of the Infant. True it is, that God might have prevented this Communication from causing

causing any disorder; but why may we not say as well, that it was the Pleasure of God to order it so sometimes for the punishment of Men? Sometimes to set a greater value upon the Beauty of his other Works; sometimes for other Reasons which are in truth unknown to us; which nevertheless we ought not to find fault with, in regard, that of all those things that fall within our Knowledge, there is not any one that does not afford us ample occasion to acknowledge the infinite Wisdom of their Creator.

They wonder that there should be Inundations, Earthquakes, Subterraneal Conflagrations, and other Accidents which seem to threaten the World with utter Ruin. But so far it is, that they from hence can prove there is not a Providence, that it is rather a proof of the contrary. For I beseech ye, were there not a Providence, how is it possible that the World should subsist in the midst of such violent Concussions, or that it should have held out so long time? A Ship abandon'd to the Mercy of the Winds, without either Helm or Pilot, can never run a steady course, without dashing against the Rocks, or being swallow'd up by the Waves.

Whence comes it then, that these subterraneal Fires, these Earthquakes, and these Inundations, cause not that universal Havock which they might do? By what unexpected Power are the Effects of these dreadful Accidents, suspended or limited? Who is it that corrects the Distempers of a corrupted Air? What Virtue purifies whole Cities and Regions infected with the Pestilence? Certainly

Certainly he must be very blind, who sees not that 'tis the same Hand which made the Universe that preserves it; and that after God has made use of these Inundations, these Fires and Earthquakes for those ends, which to us are for the most part unknown, he stops 'em from going any farther, and destroying the vast Machine of the World.

Lastly, they are astonish'd that Good Men should be so often oppress't, and that the Wicked should triumph; That Impiety and Vice should reign predominant, and that Innocence and Virtue should be overwhelmed. This is one of their great Objections, that has so much perplex'd the Wise in all Ages. *Claudian* confesses ingenuously, *That he questions whether the World be Govern'd by a Wise, Intelligent Providence, or by Blind Fortune, beholding Virtue under Oppression*; *and* Rufinus, *the most famous Criminal of his Age, flourishing in high Advancement.* And it is reported of a certain Philosopher, that he became an Atheist, because he observ'd that God did not inflict immediate Punishment upon a perjur'd Person. And the Wise *Cato*, unfortunate in fighting for the Liberty of his Country, could not forbear saying, *That there was a great Incertainty in the Government of the Gods.* To which I may add what is related of *Democritus*, *That he put out his Eyes with the Reverberation of a glittering Buckler, because he would not behold the Prosperity of the Wicked*, Tho' I must confess, that this last Story seems to me very imbrobable: For what likelihood is there that *Democritus*, who only made it his Business to ridicule

dicule all the World, ſhould be troubled at the Proſperity of the Ungodly?

Now, tho' this Objection ſeem very plauſible, nevertheleſs it is very eaſily anſwer'd. Firſt, it is not always true that Virtue is oppreſs'd, and Vice recompenc'd. Good Men are not always afflicted; and the Wicked are frequently puniſh'd, no Man will preſume to deny it. Nor are there any Ages or Years that do not furniſh us with Examples. Thus the ſame *Claudian*, who was offended at the Proſperity of *Ruſinus*, ſays, That the Puniſhment which he receiv'd, abſolv'd the Gods: *Abſtulit hunc tandem Ruſini Pœna Tumultum, Aàſolvitque Deos.* In the ſecond place, People who are not ſo, are many times thought to be virtuous and good People, becauſe they carry a fair out-ſide of Probity and Piety. 'Tis needleſs to produce any Proofs of it; 'tis agreed upon by all the World; there is no Perſon that has not been frequently deceiv'd; and there are an infinite number who deceive themſelves.

But to unfold this difficulty more clearly, I aſſert, that they moſt groſly deceive themſelves, when they imagine the Wicked to be happy, becauſe they appear to be ſo; becauſe they are rich, becauſe they are advanced to vaſt Preferments, and wallow in Pleaſure and Delights. How many are there that ſeem to enjoy a perfect Felicity, who are really moſt unfortunate, and tormented with bitter Pangs of an accuſing Conſcience! How many wealthy People are there, whoſe Condition is much more ſad than that of the moſt miſerable Wretches! How many

ny great Men are there, who in their Elevat
Stations, enjoy no rest or quiet Day or Night
I need no other Testimony than *Tiberius*, wh
could not forbear declaring to the *Roman* Senat
that ever day he died a cruel Death. Co
you but look into the Insides of those that you esteem
Happy and Rich, said *Seneca*, *you would find 'em*
be Miserable, to be Poor, to be Infamous, and th
they resemble those Walls which are only Paint
without side. Such a Felicity is no solid and tr
Felicity; 'tis only an Image and slight Appearan
of it. For which reason it is, that while they c
stand upon their Legs, and make a vain Bravado
Grandeur, they appear what they are not, and ma
People believe 'em happy. But if any accident h
falls 'em, that puts 'em out of Order, and discove
'em, then you come to see the Filth and Infamy th
borrow'd Splendour conceals. And the famous H
storian *Tacitus*, speaking of Tyrants, *could we h*
see their Souls laid open, says he, *we should beh*
'em torn and mangled by their own Crimes, like t
Bodies of Criminals cut with the Lashes of t
Whip. We must not wonder then to see t
Wicked Potent and Rich, in Grandeur and R
putation; so far from thence concluding th
there is no Providence, that we have no reas
to envy their Felicity.

I confess however, that there would be so
reason to be astonish'd at their appearing Pros
rity, were there no other Life but this, and th
we were not then to come to Judgment. B
before we blame the Conduct of the Almig
ty, or before we deny a Providence, we oug
to be assur'd there is no other Life to be expect
af

ter this, and that God will never punish those
om he now supports. Now I know not, whe-
er there be any one to be met with who will
esume to assert, that he is clearly convinced,
at there is nothing to be thought of after this
ife, that there is nothing to be hop'd or fear'd
ter Death, tho' there are several who endea-
our to persuade themselves, that it is certainly
ne, with whom we shall enter the Lists in the
quel of our Discourse.

The Second Reflection is, that 'tis an Error to
elieve good Men Unhappy because they are af-
icted; seeing that Afflictions are so useful to
ose that are expos'd to 'em, whereby to make
m sensible of the Emptiness of this World, and
e Vanities of it; to wean 'em from this Earth,
d make 'em think of a better Life; to tame
eir Pride; to reduce 'em from their Deviati-
s and Wandrings, and bring 'em back to their
uty. These are the Benefits of Misfortune,
which it would be easie to convince the most
bstinate.

Now for a Man to be convinc'd, that Afflicti-
s do not render the Sufferers unhappy, he
eeds no more but to consider the Tranquillity
Mind which good Men enjoy when they are
ost afflicted. One would think sometimes that
e suffers in the Body of another Person, or that
e is insensible; or if it happen that through the
iolence of his Pain, he discovers some Motions
Impatience, and lets fall some Murmurings,
e recovers himself presently again. You shall see
ereneſs and Joy reseated in his Countenance:
ou shall hear him bless God for chastizing him
with

with so much Lenity: He acknowledges the B[e]nefit of his Afflictions. and that he stood in n[ee]d of such Paternal Correction.

If they, against whom I dispute, did but a[c]knowledge the Divinity of the Scriptures, I could draw from thence an infinite number of Proofs against 'em; but I shall content my[self] with sending 'em to the School of a Pagan, I mean *Seneca*, who has compos'd a Treatise upon this Subject, *Why so many Calamities befal Good Men*: And thus he argues:

"When you see Good Men, and such as are "acceptable to the Gods, in Pain, in Trouble, "in Adversity, travelling through a difficult and "rugged Road; but, on the contrary, behold "the Wicked in Joy, in Plenty, in Pleasure, take "notice that we are pleas'd with the Modesty "of our Children, and the Liberty of our Ser-"vants, that we keep the first under severe Dis-"cipline, and that we sometimes bear with the "boldness of the other. You ought to believe "the same thing of the Gods. They do not na-"ture Good Men in Pleasures and Delights, "they try 'em, they harden 'em, they train 'em "up, and instruct 'em like Soldiers which they "intend to list under their Banners.

And because it might be objected against him, "Is it then advantageous to be Banish'd, to "be reduc'd to Poverty, to behold the Death "of Children, and a dearly-beloved Wife, to be "branded with Infamy, to see a Man's self be-"reft of every thing? He answers, "If you "wonder that this should be advantageous to "any body, you may as well admire that some

"Peop[le]

People are cur'd by Cutting and Burning, and that Hunger and Drouth are made use of to the same effect: But if you consider with your self, that sometimes for Health's sake the Surgeon is forced to rifle the Veins, to scrape and pluck away the Bones, and cut off Members, which else would endanger the whole Body: You may as well permit us to tell ye, that these are Calamities no less advantageous to those that endure 'em.

But some will say, If there be a Providence, how comes it to pass that Sin is permitted? This is very near the same Argument, which a Pagan Philosopher made use of, *If there be a God*, said he, *whence proceeds Evil?* But he as suddenly recollects himself, *If there be no God, whence proceeds Good?* This Difficulty gave the *Manichæans* an occasion to set up Two Principles, the one of Good, the other of Evil; and *Manes* borrow'd this Opinion from the *Persians*, who attribute all their Blessings to their God *Oromasdes*, and all their Evils to *Aramanius*; as the *Egyptians* made *Typhon* the Author of all their Calamities, while they look'd upon *Isis* and *Osiris* as the two Deities from which they receiv'd all their Kindnesses. I confess, we know not the Reason why God permits Sin; yet all that can be inferr'd from thence, is only this, that still we know not the Designs of God; but this Ignorance ought not to make us deny a Truth which we may clearly apprehend, and which is grounded upon the same Idea that we have of a most perfect Being. This is merely want of the force of Wit, and to abandon evident Truths, for

some

ſome Objections that are made us, which
cannot reſolve, tho' the ſame Objections have
other ground than the Ignorance and Weak
of Human Underſtanding: So that thoſe P
ple who are call'd ſoaring *Wits*, are indeed
petty Wits, that have more of Pride in 'em t
of Senſe and Reaſon.

What! muſt we preſently deny a Provide
becauſe we are Ignorant of the Conduct of
If there be a Providence, they cry, there wo
be no Diſorder; but if there be no Provide
there would be nothing but Confuſion. Cert
ly, altho' we could never yet diſcover, why G
was pleas'd to permit Sin to enter into
World, yet we ought to believe that he has d
it for Reaſons becoming a moſt perfect Be
More eſpecially ſince Sin has given us an O
portunity to diſcover all the Properties of G
his Juſtice, his Holineſs, his Mercy, his Pow
his Wiſdom, not to ſpeak of the admirable W
of our Redemption, wherein all the Virtue
a Deity have appear'd with ſo much Luſt
but which God had never thought of, had th
been no Sin.

Certain it is then, that there is a Providen
and this is that which it behov'd us to prov
gainſt the firſt Order of our *Indifferent Men.*

CHA

CHAP. V.

Against those that believe, that Providence does not concern it self in Affairs of Religion.

THere are some who dare not absolutely deny that there is a Providence; but they believe that it only concerns it self in Things of the highest Importance, as Kingdoms, Empires, or Republicks, but never examins what Belief the Inhabitants of the World profess, as if it were indifferent to it what Men profess'd.

'Twill be no difficult thing to refute this Opinion: For first, 'tis an Error to believe that Providence has not the same share in the Government of Little as of Great Affairs. For why should we not believe, that God both Manages and Governs all that he preserves, and whatever he has made? It is because it is beneath a God to take care of the smallest Insects? But why should that be so, when he has been pleas'd to produce 'em out of Nothing? Have we not rather reason to admire a Sovereign Being, who having all Creatures within the Extent of his Empire, causes 'em to subsist by his Word, and sustains 'em by his Power? Think they that God would debase himself too much in doing it? But if the Sun shines upon the most contemptible Dunghils, yet cannot be said to disgrace himself, why will they not admit that God should act upon the meanest of his Creatures, without any diminution of his Grandeur and Majesty.

But

But they will say, That 'tis impossible that God should manage and govern all things; as if they could be ignorant that the Knowledge and Power of God are infinite; and that if it be his will alone, there needs no more for him to do in the Ruling and Ordering of all things. And therefore, the reason why our Indifferents argue so ill, is this, because they have no other Idea of God than of a Man, whose Illuminations are narrowly confin'd, whose Strength is but very small, and who not being able to busie himself everywhere, is constrain'd to employ himself upon a certain number of Objects.

Moreover, they imagine, that because we despise all those little things that are of no use to us, 'tis the same thing with God; never considering, that if God took no care but only of those Creatures that are useful to him, or of those only that bear some proportion with him, all the Creatures, even those only which we most esteem, not being able to add to, or diminish any thing from his Glory and Felicity; and being all infinitely below him, he might equally disdain and neglect 'em all together.

But not to enter any farther into the Discussion of this Question, must not they be willingly blind, who dare presume to number what concerns the Worship which is due to the Deity, among things of little importance? Is there any one which is of greater moment than that which has a regard to the Sovereign Being, which all Men ought to adore? And is it likely that God should rule and govern Monarchies and Republicks, and leave Men at their liberty to serve him

him according to their Fancies? As if it were a thing Indifferent to Him, to be ador'd, for example, under the shape of the most vile and worthless Animals, as the Pagans painted some of their Gods. Is it possible that Men can have such extravagant Thoughts of the most Perfect of all Beings? Where is that King so negligent as to permit his Subjects the liberty to act according to their own Humours in his Affairs, in his Armies, in his Exchequer, and leaves it to their discretion to obey and serve him as their Caricio's lead 'em? How then can they who boast their Wit, presume to say of God, the Wisest of all Beings, what no Man would venture to say of a Person meerly mortal?

Besides, were it true, that God took no care of things that concern Religion, whence comes it to pass, that they who are of this Opinion pay some certain Homage to the Deity? Wherefore do they sometimes pray to him, since God takes no notice of what they do, and consequently never troubles himself about their neglect of his Worship? Their Actions ill agree with their Belief, and cause those that see 'em to believe that they are of another Opinion. Therefore it was a good Saying of one *Diocles*, who espying *Epicurus* in the Temple, cry'd out, *What a Feast, what a Spectacle is this for me, to see* Epicurus *in the Temple! All my Suspicions are vanish'd, Piety resumes her Seat, and I never more clearly beheld the Grandeur of* Jupiter, *than now, that I see* Epicurus *upon his Knees.* Certainly, if this Opinion which we have refuted were true, there would be never any more need of paying Worship to a Deity

ty. 'Twas true, that *Epicurus* confeſs'd, that
Excellency of Divine Nature deſerv'd of it
that ſome Honour ſhould be given to Her,
ſhe concern'd her ſelf no more with the Wo
than if there were no ſhare of her in it, and
there were nothing to be expected by it f
her. But he only ſpoke thus in conformity
the Common Sentiments. For, in ſhort, the
of that Philſopher, according to his Syſtem,
a Piece apart from the Workmanſhip, whi
Man might well ſuppoſe not to belong to it,
yet no change befal it. Otherwiſe it is cer
that if he had acted and ſpoken conformably
his Real Opinion, he would have ſaid in p
terms, that Piety was a fruitleſs thing, and
would never have perform'd any act of Rel
on. *Cicero* therefore rightly underſtood h
l. 1. *de Nat. Deor. There are ſome People,* ſays
and have been, before now, who believe that the
never meddle with human Affairs, But if
Opinion be true, what will become of Piety?

CHAP. VI.

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

I Come to thoſe who never much torm
themſelves, whether there be any Provide
or no, becauſe they hold the Soul to be M
tal, that it periſhes with the Body, or at le
that there is no farther fear of any thing a
this Life; that there will be no Judgme
that all that has been ſaid of Paradiſe and H

re meer Fables, such as the Pagans feign'd of
heir *Elisian* Fields, *&c.* And therefore that all
Religions ought to be indifferent to us, since
ve shall be never more happy, nor the
more unfortunate, whatever Religion we em-
race.

'Tis a wonderful thing, that there should be
ound among Christians, Men that dare deny
what the Heathens have acknowledg'd, and what
he most Barbarous of Nations acknowledge to
his day, as we are given to understand by ma-
y Relations. And this to such a degree, that
r from believing that the Soul perishes, they
ave rather chosen to hold, some of 'em, that
e Soul was from all Eternity. Others, that
hen the Soul took leave of one Body, it trans-
igrated into another, or else was re-united to
od; or that it was transform'd into some An-
el or Devil; or that it intermix'd it self with
e Elements. And this Opinion of the Soul's
eing Immortal, infused that Courage and Un-
auntedness into 'em, which they made appear
n Fight, as *Bartholinus* observes of the *Danes*,
n his Book of the Antiquity of *Denmark*.

'Tis a thing so much the more surprizing, be-
ause there are an infinite number of Reasons
hat convince us of the Immortality of the Soul.
might prove it by the ardent Desires of Immor-
ality, and by that Idea which we naturally have
f a future Life; an Idea which nothing can era-
icate; so that there is no Person who indepen-
ently from all Consideration, and from all Edu-
ation, but either fears or hopes something, ac-
ording as he has either led a virtuous or vicious

Life, when he ponders upon the ſame darkſo
and gloomy Futurity, wherein the preſent l
ſets from our Eyes. But to make out this Tr
as clear as day, I argue thus: If the Soul d
ſuch a Death would happen, either becauſe
parts of it would come to ſeparate, or bec
it would deſtroy it ſelf; or becauſe ſome o
created Subſtance would deſtroy it, or bec
that God himſelf would annihilate it. There
be conceiv'd no other Cauſes of the Soul's
ing: But it is certain, that there can noth
like this be ſaid of the Soul.

1. It cannot be ſaid, that the Parts of the S
ſeparate from one another; becauſe the Soul
no parts; it is a Spirit. And he muſt be bl
that dares deny it, and aſſert, that the Soul i
more than Matter, than Wind, or a Vapour, t
a certain Agitation of ſubtil Spirits intermi
with the Blood. It is impoſſible to conce
that a Soul which knows it ſelf, and all ot
Beings that ſurround it, that reaches ſubl
Truths, that knows an inviſible God, that
flects with it ſelf upon its own Thoughts, t
meaſures the Stars, the Earth, and Seas, that c
rects our Senſes and Imagination; that pe
trates into Futurity, and diſcovers the deep
Secrets, ſhould be nothing but an agitated M
ter; becauſe that nothing is more incompreh
ſible than a Body that thinks, that reaſons, t
deliberates and reflects upon it ſelf. Which w
ſoever the Parts of a Body are chang'd, it c
never be brought to that paſs by thoſe vari
Changes or Rangings, that if it knew not it
before, it ſhould ever come to know it ſelf;
con

ould it ever be made capable of having one ſin-
e thought, With all the Efforts of our Wit, we
n never comprehend what *Epicurus* ſaid, That
ur Reaſonings and our Ideas are no more than
e Agitation of certain little Bodies, and that
e circular Motion of an Atom, may be the
aſt and immenſe Idea of Infinity. It is alſo as
bſurd to ſay that a Body knows, as to ſay that
Thought is red or green; that the Act of Ar-
uing is hot or cold, or that a metaphyſical Spe-
ulation is round or ſquare. 'Tis clear then,
hat the Soul is not Material, and that by conſe-
uence it has no Parts; and therefore it cannot
ie. No Sickneſs can deſtroy it, becauſe it has
o Blood, nor Humor that can feed it. Neither
Sword nor Fire can kill it, becauſe it has no
Parts that Iron can divide, or Fire conſume.

2. Neither can the Soul be ſaid to deſtroy it
elf; for Right Reaſon teaches us, that nothing
ends of it ſelf to its own Deſtruction and Ruin;
that every Being is deſirous of it ſelf to remain
n the ſame Condition wherein it is; and that
very Change that happens to any Subject, pro-
ceeds from an exterior Cauſe; beſides, that it
can never be conceiv'd how a Soul ſhould de-
ſtroy it ſelf.

3 It cannot be ſaid, that the Soul can be de-
ſtroy'd by other created Subſtances; becauſe
we ought not to aſſure our ſelves of what we
cannot conceive, unleſs God reveals it to us.
Now it is impoſſible to comprehend, that a
created and finite Subſtance, can deſtroy a ſpiri-
tual Nature; nor do we know it to be other-
wiſe by Revelation.

4. It cannot be said that God destroys a[n] annihilates our Souls. For besides that the A[n]nihilation of a Being, is one of those things [a]which there is not any example in Nature; [w]have no Revelation that God designs the An[ni]hilation of Souls. On the contrary, if they wi[th] whom we contend, would acknowledge the D[i]vinity of Scripture, it would be easie for me [to] produce 'em Proofs, which invincibly make o[ur] this Immortality which we assert.

The first Argument may be supported by [a] second; which is this, That if the Soul be n[ot] immortal, and that there be no other Life afte[r] this. we must then conclude, that it was on[ly] given to Man to render him more miserab[le] than the Beasts, and to be a torment to hi[m]. For if Man had not a Rational Soul, the Re[-]membrance of what is past, the Consideration [of] the present, and the Apprehension of Futurity would never afflict his Mind; but he would [be] like the Beasts, which, if we may believe th[e] new Philosophers, feel no pain, or if they do fe[el] any, 'tis only a present pain. If then the So[ul] be not immortal, it would have been better th[at] God had made us walking Machines, than [to] give us a Soul only to make us suffer.

'Tis said, that Men being so like to Beasts all dies with him, as it is with other Cre[a]tures. But this Objection is unworthy a Ratio[-]nal Man. 'Tis true, that there is some Confor[-]mity between a Man and a Beast. A Man is born, and is subject to Death; he preserves his Life by Nourishment, and his Kind by Generati[-]on, and he is subject to the Irregularities of Hu[-]mors.

ors. All this is common with the Beasts. I nfeſs likewiſe that there is a Conformity which diſgraceful to Man; and this is that which onſiſts in the Diſorders of the Body and Senſes, nd the Predominancy of the Paſſions. 'Tis a ame to Man that his Paſſions over-rule him, here Reaſon ought to command, and that he is not the Maſter of his own Body, nor of all he Motions of it: Nevertheleſs, all that can be concluded from hence is, that Man is Mortal, ſo far as he has any thing of Conformity with Beasts. But we muſt renounce our Reaſon, if we deny that Man has not an infinite number of things that exalt him above Brutes; and in that reſpect it is, that Man is immortal.

Altho' they who believe the Soul to be mortal, laugh at the Revelation, yet there are ſome who make uſe of a Paſſage in *Eccleſiaſtes*, to confirm their Opinion; 'tis in *Chap.* 13. 19, 20, 21. *The ſame thing befalleth both Man and Beaſts, the death of the one is like the death of the other; both the one and the other breath the ſame Breath; and Man has no advantage above a Beaſt; for all is vanity; all goes the ſame way; all was duſt, and to duſt they ſhall return. Who knows whether the breath of a Man mounts upward, or whether the breath of a Beaſt deſcends downward?*

But if theſe People, who borrow the Authority of *Solomon* to ſupport their Error, had read the Book from which they fetch'd their Argument, they would have ſeen that that ſame Great and Wiſe Prince was far from believing the Soul to be mortal. His aim is there, only to withdraw the Hearts of Men from the Love of

the World, from their extraordinary Propens
to the Creatures, and all things that fall und
the Senſes; on purpoſe to encline and perſua
'em to love, to fear, and ſerve the Lord on
And this is the concluſion which he draws at t
end of his Book from all the Arguments wh
he produc'd before. The ſcope of the wh
Diſcourſe is, *Fear God, and keep his Comman
ments; for this is the whole Duty of Man.* Now
leave it to Judgment, whether if *Solomon* h
thought that the Soul did not ſubſiſt after death,
would have taken ſo much pains to excite Me
to the Exerciſes of Piety, for which there w
no Reward to be expected, ſince the Belief
the Immortality of the Soul, is the Foundatio
of Piety and Religion.

But for an abſolute Conviction, that thi
Great King did not believe the Soul to be mor
tal, there needs no more than to read his Tent
Chapter, From the very beginning he threa
tens Men with a Judgment to come, and exhort
'em to remember God in the Days of thei
Youth, and not to delay their turning to Go
till the laſt years of their Lives. A needleſs Ex
hortation, if the Soul were to die. For what
reaſon is there that Man ſhould fear any thing
after death, if all were to die with him? After
wards in the 9th Verſe, he tells us in expreſs
terms, That *the Duſt returns to the Earth from
whence it was taken, but that the Spirit returns to
God that gave it.* Is not this an invincible Proof
that he believed the Immortality of our Souls?
For how could it be ſaid that our Spirit ſhould
return to God that gave it, if it ſubſiſted no lon-

ger

ger, after it was departed from the Body which it enlivened? Is it possible that a nothing of Soul and Spirit should return to the Bosom of God?

The wise *Solomon* so little believ'd our Soul to be mortal, that in the same Chapter, *vers.* 17. he says, *God shall judge the Just and the Unjust; and then shall be the time for all things, and over all his Works.* Which he would never have said, had he had the least thought that our Soul died with the Body.

So that by the Passage which they alledge, he meant no other thing but that in respect of the Body, the conditions of the Beast was equal to that of Men; that the same thing befals him; and that to judge by outward appearances, when we see a Man die, it seems as if he dy'd like a Beast, and that there was no difference between 'em. And this was the Judgment which the prophane Libertines in *Solomon*'s time made of it.

But what we have said, is certainly the precise sence of the Words. For if from the Saying of *Ecclesiastes, Who knows whether the breath of a Beast ascends upward, and the breath of a Beast descends downward?* We must conclude, that if *Solomon* was ignorant of that which was to happen, he would have spoken against his own Knowledge, seeing that in *Chap.* 12. he says expressly, *That the Spirit returns to God.* We must also believe, that he questions whether or no the Breath of Beasts descended downwards, since he makes use of the same Expression, *Who knows whether the Breath of a Beast,* &c. Now is this a thing that so wise a Man as *Solomon* could doubt of? or could he be inclin'd to observe an error which few believe,

that the Spirit of Beasts is immortal? Tho' we must confess there are some People that are of this Opinion, if we may believe the *Portuguese* Relation of the Easter *Æthiopia*.

It will be said, perhaps, that the Soul being strictly united with the Body, it cannot be conceiv'd how the Body should die, and the Soul be immortal. But this Argument is absurd; for were the Soul and Body of the same Nature, there were some room for this Objection. But in regard they are of a different Nature, and that the Motions of the Soul are absolutely independent from those of the Body; as for example, when she meditates upon God, why may we not say, that it subsists without a Body like the Angels? And so much for this Subject. Let us now examine whether we ought to believe a Day of Judgment.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Judgment to come.

IT is impossible to reflect upon the Nature of God, without being convinc'd of a Day of Judgment. The Idea which we have of God, obliges us to look upon him as a Being Supreamly Wise, most Just, most Holy, and most Perfect. But we can never consider him as a Being most Wise, Just, and Perfect, unless we understand at the same time, that he is one day to call Men to Judgment, and to reward or punish 'em, according as they have liv'd upon the Earth,

Earth. In ſhort, How can it be conceiv'd, that a God who made all things, who loves Order and Holineſs to the higheſt Degree, and who always acts conformably to his Virtues, can let go unpuniſh'd the Contempts which his Creatures put upon his Laws, and that he can look with the ſame Glances of his Favour upon thoſe that employ themſelves in his Praiſes, and they that vomit forth Blaſphemies againſt him; thoſe that confeſs his Holy Name, and thoſe that abjure it; upon virtuous Men, and the moſt infamous Debauchees; upon St. *Peter* and a *Herod*; upon St. *Paul* and a *Nero*; a St. *John* and a *Domitian*; and yet this is that which we muſt ſay of God, were it true that there would be no Day of Judgment. For that Perſon muſt be very ignorant of the Affairs and Tranſactions of this World, who underſtands not, that Puniſhment does not always attend the Tranſgreſſion, and that the Wicked are not always chaſtiz'd; but that the Innocent are ſometimes oppreſs'd, and the Guilty juſtify'd.

Now can we believe, that the Sanctity and Wiſdom of God would ſuffer Virtue to remain without Reward, or Vice without Puniſhment, had he not decreed a Day wherein to render unto every Man according to his Works? No, doubtleſs, God has not ſuffer'd all the Wicked to go unpuniſh'd, that Men might not believe there was no Providence; nor does he puniſh all, that Men might thence infer, there will be a time of Judgment. The inviſible Hand of God collects together whatever Man does, whatever he thinks, and whatever he ſays; all is hoarded up in the Treaſure of his Juſtice. But after God has gather'd

ther'd all his Magazines, he will return all back again, and cauſe to re-deſcend on Men, whatever Men ſent up to Heaven.

To this firſt Argument, in my Opinion, another may be added, which is taken from the Remorſe, the Troubles, and the Agitations of Conſcience, when a Man has committed any Crime, tho' ſecret tranſgreſſions, and ſuch as are not to be diſcover'd. For from whence proceed thoſe Terrors, I beſeech ye, if it be not from an Apprehenſion of a Judgment, which there is no poſſibility of avoiding?

It may be objected, perhaps, that there are none but the weaker ſort that labour under theſe Diſquiets, theſe Turmoils and Stings of Conſcience; little Children, poor Ideots, and ſilly Women. But where is that Man, who having ſworn a falſe Oath, committed Murder, or any other crying Act of Injuſtice, is not ſenſible of the ſharp Rebukes and Upbraidings of his Conſcience? 'Tis not what Women only or Children do; this is a queſtion reaches all that have offended againſt Heaven.

It may be alſo further ſaid, that 'tis the Apprehenſion of the rigour of human Laws which cauſes all thoſe Terrors, not the Dread of any Celeſtial Tribunal. But whence then comes it to paſs, that thoſe Monarchs, who ſet themſelves above the Reach of all Terreſtrial Juſtice, and boaſted of their Abominations, were not exempted from theſe Affrights and Convulſions of Self-conviction; ſuch as *Nero*, *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Caracalla*, who were flatter'd every day, that they might do what they pleas'd, and who never heard

a word of the Law of God, of the Severity of his Juſtice, or of a Judgment to come?

Others will alledge, that theſe Commotions are the Effect of our Education. But how comes it that we neglect and contemn ſo many other things infus'd into us by our Education, but never can deface theſe deep Impreſſions? Whence proceeds it, that all Mankind, with their conjoin'd Efforts, could never calm theſe tempeſtuous Agitations, nor diſſipate theſe Fears? Whence comes it to paſs, that upon the approach of Death, the greateſt Libertines, and moſt Prophane, tremble at the remembrance of their Impiety, and their Horrors ſtill augment, the nearer they draw toward their end? For if nothing were to follow but Annihilation, whence ſo much Agony?

Laſtly, it will be ſaid, that there are many People who feel none of theſe inward Stings. But beſides that, it would be a difficult thing to name any of thoſe Perſons whoſe Conſciences are altogether dead and inſenſible; and that others might be thought to be void of all Fear, becauſe they knew how to conceal it; their inconſiderable number can by no means weaken our Argument; as it does not follow that the Exiſtence of God is not a Truth beyond control, becauſe there are ſome perhaps that do not believe it.

The univerſal Conſent, in reference to this Point, of all Nations that have acknowledg'd a Deity, is a ſufficiently convincing Proof of the Truth of what we poſitively aſſert. For how comes it, that ſo many Men agree in this particular,

cular, altho' they differ in so many other things. Is it not a Proof that this is one of those Truths of which we come to the knowledge as soon as we begin to make use of our Reason, and which we cannot withstand without renouncing the Light of our Intellects? It would be no difficult thing for me to prove this Universal Consent, would I but collect together what the Pagans have written concerning the condition of Souls after death; of the Judges before whom they were to appear; of the Punishment and Rewards prepar'd for Men in the other World; all that *Plato* believ'd upon this Subject; and particularly the * Recital which he causes one *Ammenius* to make in his Republick, whom he introduces return'd to the Earth twelve Days after his Death, to make a Report of all that is transacted in Hell, and giving an account, that the Judges, before whom the Souls of the departed appear, place the Just upon the Right hand, and the wicked upon the Left, and cause the Virtuous to ascend to Heaven, while the Latter are forced to descend.

* *Plat. de Republ. l.* 11.

I might add what *Strabo* relates of the *Brachmans* among the *Indians*; what is recited to us by those who have travell'd into *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*. And I might add to all these Proofs, another, which might be drawn from the Opinion of almost all Nations, that there was a necessary Duty incumbent upon 'em to appease the Deity; which prevail'd so far, that many offer'd Human Sacrifices for that purpose.

I add to all these Arguments this Reflection; That if there be no future Judgment, Virtue is no more than a Fantom, and that 'tis a Folly to pursue her Maxims: Men may give themselves over to all sorts of Crimes and Impieties, without Reluctancy; he may be a Traytor, perjur'd Wretch, a Knave, a Faithless Villain, an Adulterer; from this time forward he has no more to do but to make himself most powerful in Society, and preserve his Life, since he has nothing to fear after Death, no most than if he had led a Life the most exact and virtuous that could be imagin'd. But where is that Man to be found that wou'd not abominate an Opinion that favours, in this manner, the most horrid of Crimes, and most impious Enormities? Or if it were receiv'd, what Man would be willing to brook, that the World should be no other than a wide Receptacle of only Thieves and Robbers, a meer Chaos, where there was no Curb upon the Conscience?

CHAP. VIII.

Where it is prov'd, that altho' we had no certain Proofs of a Judgment to come, yet we ought to live in such a manner, as if we were assur'd of one.

LET us press a little closer upon those against whom we dispute, and put the Question to 'em, Whether they are well assured, that all that is said of the Day of Judgment

ment and Life to come, are Fables and Stories as they loudly gave out. Do they believe it to be a thing contrary to the Virtue of a most Perfect Being, to punish those who have so often violated his Laws, those that refus'd to obey him, and whom he spar'd in this Life? Is it less becoming God to be Just than to be Merciful? I question whether any body will presume to uphold it, tho' there are many who have doubted the truth of the Day of Judgment; and others who upon their death-beds have said, That they were going to be inform'd of three things; whether there were a God? whether the Soul were immortal? and whether there were a Heaven or Hell? a very edifying Confession. I will grant that our *Indifferent Men* may not be absolutely convinc'd by our alledged Reasons, or by any others which we could produce: However, they must confess, that there is some cause to question, whether the Sentiment which they have embrac'd be true or no. They believe, that all Remorse of Conscience proceeds from the Prejudices of Education. But I believe they proceed from an apprehension of being punish'd for what we have committed, and from the fear of a Judgment, which is not possible for us to avoid. They say, that I am deceiv'd; yet they ought at least to acknowledge, that it is not so clear that I am in an Error; but that there may be some reason to doubt whether I am or no. This then appears to be their Condition, that they know not certainly, according to their own confession, whether they shall be eternally miserable, as it is requisit for 'em to acknowledge, that

that they have deſerv'd to be by their Tranſ-greſſions, or whether they ſhall be annihilated. Good God! what an uncertainty is this! Would it not then be better, in the midſt of this uncertainty, to practice that which would gain 'em eternal Felicity, if it be true that there is a Paradiſe, than to do thoſe things that are rewarded with eternal Pains, if there be a Judgment, or a Hell? In the choice of Opinions, which Men know not certainly whether they be true or falſe, ſound Judgment and right Reaſon require, that Men ſhould prefer the Steerage that leads 'em to gain, if Truth be on their ſide, and where there is nothing to loſe, if they be deceiv'd; and on the other hand, reject that by which they can gain nothing, tho' they were in the right, but much to loſe, ſhould it prove their misfortune to be deluded. This is now our caſe. A Man who lives as if he were to be judg'd, has nothing to be afraid of, ſuppoſing he ſhould be deceiv'd; but every thing to hope for, if he be not in an Error. He has nothing to be afraid of, if he has been miſtaken, unleſs it be that after Death he finds no God, no Paradiſe, nor meets any more with himſelf again. I confeſs, that this is to be look'd upon as a great Misfortune; but at leaſt he ought no more to be afraid of any ſuffering, or that he ſhall be more miſerable, than he who has liv'd as if there were no Judgment to be expected. Both the one and the other muſt loſe their Being, and all the Conſequences of Being, as Pain, Pleaſure, Felicity, and Miſery. This is the greateſt Miſchief that can befal a good Chriſtian, ſuppoſing him to be

in

in an Error. But if he be not deceiv'd, he may be ſure of enjoying Felicity eternal, and infinite Happineſs. There is then great Gain attend him, if he be not deluded; but there is nothing to loſe in caſe he be, by the Confeſſion of the ungodly themſelves. On the other ſide, a Man who believes not a laſt Judgment, and who lives in the unbelief of it, has nothing to hope for, if he be not deceived, becauſe his greateſt Felicity is to be annihilated; but every thing to be afraid of, if he be under a miſtake, For if at his departure out of the World, he finds there is a God, that there is a Judgment, or a Hell, then cannot be imagin'd a Creature more miſerable.

Now let any Man judge, whether it be not the Accompliſhment of Extravagance to make choice of an Opinion, whereby a Man runs the riſque of being eternally miſerable, and hopes for nothing but Annihilation: And whether tho' there were no certain proofs of a Judgment to come, it were not better for them always to demean themſelves, as if they were to be judg'd. I ſay no more; for this is ſufficient to ſhew that ſince our *Indifferent Men* are not aſſur'd that there is no Judgment, they ought not to build upon this Opinion the *Indifferency* of Religions.

CHAP

CHAP. IX.

Wherein is examin'd, whether there be any thing True or False, Just or Unjust.

AMong those whom I call *Indifferent Men*, there are some who believe, that there is nothing True or False, Just or Unjust, so that it is lawful to do whatever a Man pleases, and to embrace that Religion that agrees most with their Interests. Who could ever believe, that in our Age there should be People that would go about to introduce such Scepticism into Religion. There is nothing True, say they: Yet at least, according to their Sentiments, it must be true, that there is nothing True. Moreover, is it not true, that they who maintain this Argument, have a Being, that they are Thinking Souls, and extended Bodies; that it is impossible a Thing should be, and not be at the same time, that two and two make four, and that the Whole is bigger than the Part? Certainly, there is no body so extravagant as to deny it. We do not dispute of this matter, will the *Indifferent Men* say; but of things that concern Religion, I grant it, 'Tis already very much, that they will confess that there is something true; but still it is not true that there is a God; that this God is most Perfect, most Just, Omnipotent, &c. At least, it is no more true, than to say, there is no God, or, that this God is an imperfect Being and Unjust.

I do not believe that these Scepticks dare deny it, unless they will speak against their own Con-

Consciences: For then there is nothing so easi
as to deny every thing, and to maintain at noon
day that the Sun is not risen, or that a Circle i
a Square. I am well assur'd, that if our *Pyrrho*
nians would speak sincerely, they would acknow
ledge, that it is also true, that God ought to be
serv'd, and that in such a manner as is agree
ble to his Nature. They are therefore mo
grosly mistaken, who assert, that there is nothin
of Truth. In short, every Proposition ought t
be true or false. It is true, when it affirms o
denies nothing of a Subject, but what we ough
to affirm or deny. It is false, when it affirms o
denies what ought not to be affirmed or denied
But it is not certain, will our Scepticks say
that upon every Subject we may find out Rea
sons, *pro* and *con*, equally strong and convincing
I grant there are several Subjects upon whic
Men may argue variously; insomuch, that the
shall be at a great loss which side to take, before
they have carefully weigh'd and consider'd th
Arguments on both sides. I confess also, tha
there are some very evident Truths that have
been disputed among Philosophers; among other
some have deny'd Motion. Wit loves to sport
sometimes, and endeavours to secure by So
phisms, Things the most plain and perspicuous
But I deny, that what is said on both sides i
equally solid, and that it is fit to compare So
phisms with good Arguments. There are some
Propositions to which we cannot refuse our assent
and some that we cannot deny, without acting a
gainst the Light of our Understanding. There are
some that are not so *apparent*, and others that o

pen

penly oppose Reason. All that our Scepticks say, does but teach us that we ought to stand upon our Guards, and not to hasten our Judgment with too much precipitancy, but to suspend it till Conviction, and our Understanding force us from that Hesitation. So that I extreamly approve the Rules set down by a Philosopher of our Age, who would have us, when we propose any thing, not only carefully to examin the thing, and to determin nothing till after we have well thought upon it, but also to see,

1. Whether it be not true, that we believe the thing in dispute for no other reason, but because our Masters have so taught us.

2. Whether it be not true, that we believe the thing upon no other account, but only because it was approved by a great number of Persons that have gain'd a Repute in the World.

3. Whether it be not true, that we believe the thing by reason of long use and custom; that is to say, Because we have such an Idea in our heads from our Education and our Infancy, and for that we judge that several things were true, because they were conformable to that Idea.

4. Whether it be not true, that we conclude the Truth in dispute, from a supposed Principle, and such a one which we never examin'd.

5. Whether it be not true, that we believe the thing, only because it is a Novelty.

These are the Precautions which we ought to take; but 'tis an extravagancy to maintain that there is nothing true. We naturally all of us love Truth, and we desire to find it out. Is it then to be thought that this Desire should be engrafted

grafted in all Men, if there were nothing true o
false ?

What I assert of Truth, I also speak of Ju
stice or Injustice, that is to say, that there
something of Just or Unjust, and that there is
necessary distinction between Good and Evi
between that which is honest, and that which i
not so.

In short, were there no reason for this distin
ction, it must be said, that Paricides and Bla
phemers, to speak properly, commit no Crime
that 'tis the same thing whether we hate or lo
God; whether we honour our Parents, or cu
their Throats.

Now I beseech ye, Can such Sentiments en
ter our Thoughts without horrour? They wil
say, perhaps, that this Horrour proceeds fro
the Prejudices of Education. But if it be s
how comes it to pass that the same Horrour i
universal among all People, tho' their Educatio
be very different?

They will likewise object, that Legislator
and Governors of States and Kingdoms have ta
ken great care to infuse into the People, tha
there is something of Just and Unjust. But i
it probable, that those Legislators could have a
greed so exactly, without consulting together, t
impose the same things upon so many different
People? That they were so sufficiently powerful,
as to engrave their Precepts in the bottom of the
Peoples Hearts; or so politick and cunning, a
to inspire into 'em that niceness, as to make it a
scruple of Conscience to disobey 'em? Or how
is it to be imagin'd, that so vast a number of
People

People would entertain and uphold Laws that recompence Virtue, and punish Vice, but which are otherwise so very severe and irksom, unless there were a natural Light, which makes all Men agree in the point of their Justice.

Had not Men a natural Idea, and a natural Love of Duty, Men might be made believe in that particular, whatever Imposture pleas'd; and they might be perswaded that Ingratitude, Perfidiousness, and Blasphemy, are Virtues which ought to be esteem'd; nevertheless, nothing is more impossible.

It will be said that several Nations have submitted to bad Laws as well as good. But certain it is, that never any Legislators could impose those Laws which were altogether bad. The Law-givers concern'd, still intermix 'em among the good ones, and endeavour to support 'em with good Principles, already in vogue among the People: They have also made use of Force to establish or preserve 'em; so that submission to unjust Constitutions is a proof of the Necessity of those which are just.

But let us press a little closer upon our *Pyrrhonians*. Either they are bound to obey their Reason, or they are not. If they are not oblig'd, their Reason stands 'em in no stead, and it is in vain that Nature has made 'em Rational Creatures. If they are bound, they do ill when they withdraw their Obedience from it. Therefore there is a difference between Good and Evil. It will be objected, no doubt, that Reason dictates to one Man that the thing is good; to another, that it is bad; so that it depends purely upon

upon humour. But certain it is, that there a
ſome good things, and others bad, by the Co
ſent of all Mankind: So that in that reſpe
our Reaſon is beyond all control. Moreove
the Force of that Objection reaches no farth
than to prove, that all Men have not the ſam
Parts; and that they do not all diſtinguiſh Goo
and Evil as they ought to do. But they are n
able to prove from thence that there is nothi
Juſt or Unjuſt: On the other ſide, 'tis a certa
proof, that Men have naturally an Idea, th
there is ſomething Juſt, and ſomething which
not ſo.

Let us then put this Queſtion to our Sceptic
Whether the Creature owes nothing or ſom
thing to his Creator? No Man durſt hither
maintain, that the Creature owes him nothi
If any thing, he is oblig'd to Performances; an
if he does not pay what he owes, he does i
There are ſome things which are good in them
ſelves, and others which are not ſo; and there
fore 'tis to build a ſandy Foundation to preten
to prove that Religions are Indifferent, becauſe
there is nothing by Nature good or evil.

I ſhall add but one word more, in oppoſition
to thoſe who aſſert, that to ſpeak properly, there i
nothing juſt but what agrees with our Intereſt
or with the Publick Benefit. This Opinion i
very abſurd; 1. Becauſe that right Reaſon ob-
liges us frequently to act againſt our own Inte-
reſts, and commands us to do thoſe things tha
prove miſchievous and hurtful to us, as it prohi-
bits us from other things that might redound to
our Benefit; yet after we have followed the Di-

tates of right Reason, receive a great deal of comfort and Satisfaction for so doing. 2. Because, that if Profit and Advantage were to be the Chief Rule of our Actions, our first Beginning and last End, there would be no Truth nor Sincerity between Man and Man, it would be in vain that Nature has made us sociable Creatures, and it would behove us rather to say, that Men were created to be Robbers and Poisoners, when their Interest requir'd it; which is the most horrid thing in the World. 3. Because, that if Profit were to be the Rule of all our Actions; and if the Idea of Honesty were a meer Illusion, all Men in the World would never distinguish as they do between Profitable and Honest; and Men the most corrupt would never be sensible from time to time, of the Force of that Idea. For this is a convincing Proof, that this Idea is one of the First Establishments of Nature.

CHAP. X.

Against those who believe, that the Truth is conceal'd.

IN the Croud of our *Indifferent Men*, there are some who dare not positively maintain, that there is nothing true; but they believe that Truth is plung'd in *Democritus*'s Well, and that it is entirely conceal'd from Men; and that therefore 'tis no great matter what Religion we embrace, because we know not where Truth resides.

But what we have already said in the forego
Chapter, shews the absurdity of this Opinion. F
we have sufficiently prov'd, that all these Tru
are not conceal'd from Men, but that there
a great number, who are clearly convi
that there is a God; that he is most Wise,
mighty, most Perfect; that we ought to fe
him; and that we ought to do as we would
done by.

In short, it would be a strange thing if th
were no Truths; that God had given us Und
standing capable to reach and apprehend 'em
yet that he should not have reveal'd 'em to
or that he should not have fix'd a kind of Re
tion between those Truths and our Underst
dings, to know when they meet, and when t
do not meet together. In like manner, it wo
be a surprizing thing, that God should h
created Light, and given Men Eyes to see it,
never produce it into the World. The Idea wh
we have of God is, that he is a Being both g
and gracious by doing good. Now what Id
can we have of a God that has made Creatu
and yet would conceal himself from 'em; w
has endu'd 'em with Reason to underst
Truth, yet had not reveal'd to 'em those Tru
which it most concern'd 'em to know?

If it be objected, that there are an infin
number of Truths which Man can never d
into by the Light of Nature, we must be for
to grant it, because we cannot deny it.
not to speak of the Mysteries of the Trinity a
Incarnation, &c. which the Christian Religion h
taught us, and into which the Wit of Man c
ne

ever penetrate; there are several other Truths is difficult to apprehend; which Men however d been altogether ignorant of, had it not been r Revelation. For example, Men might naally know, by the Light of Reason only, that ere is a God, and that this God ought to be a-r'd, but he knows not after what manner this veraing Being will be ador'd. He knows that he a Sinner, but he knows not by the Light of ature, which way to make his Peace with God. e may know that his Soul is immortal; but he ows not what will become of his Soul: Nor d the Pagans in this particular any other than confus'd Idea, which may be well judg'd by hat the Emperor *Adrian* said. And it appears the Discourses of *Socrates*, that wise Philoso-er, before his Death, that he was no better in-rm'd upon this Subject than the Emperor.

It is certain then, that Revelation is necessary; t we assert also, that this Revelation has been ade; and that God has manifested to Men hatever is requisite for 'em to know, to the d they may be happy; and this is that Revetion which we meet with in the Old and New estament.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Divinity of the Scripture.

IN regard there are several Persons that
not acknowledge the Books of the Old
New Testament to be Divinely inspir'd, 'tis
cessary to settle the Confirmation of this Tr
before we go any farther; and this is that wh
we shall succinctly undertake in this Chap
until we shall have accomplish'd it more at la
with God's permission, in another Treatise.

Nor do I believe it to be a thing so diffic
to demonstrate the Divinity of the Scripture
at first it seems to be: For either they must
that God has not made Himself known, or
he has reveal'd Himself, but that we know
where this Revelation is; or else they m
confess, that it is to be found in the Scriptu
They cannot say, that God has not made H
self known; for we have prov'd in the fore
ing Chapter, that they cannot maintain it, w
out having a very unworthy Idea of God. T
cannot say, that God has reveal'd Hims
but that they know not where this Revelat
is. For wherefore should God have revea
himself, if the Book be not known wherein
has declar'd his Will to Men? Therefore t
must confess. that God has made himself kno
in the Books of the Old and New Testame
For they cannot tell us of any other. beca
there is no other which has more the Charact
of Divinity; and those Characters are so visi

hat he muſt willingly hoodwink his own Eyes hat cannot ſee 'em.

In ſhort, what could be deſir'd in a Book of vhich God was the Author, than what is found n the ſacred Writings? Who is there that would ot look upon it as a Divine Work?

A Book, that teaches us Truths ſo extraordi- ary, ſo ſublime, that Men could never other- viſe have been able to have invented; yet ſuch s have a ſtrict Coherence and Tie however vith the Common Notions, which Nature, or ather the God of Nature has imprinted in our Minds; and which teaches 'em in a manner ſo oſty and ſo plain at the ſame time, that tho' here ſeem not to appear in it any Ornaments of Vulgar Eloquence, yet there is all that human Art can afford us; a Sovereign Authority which mprints Reſpect in the Soul of him that reads t, and a winning Facility, which attracts and captivates their Attention.

A Book, that gives us a greater Idea of God han can be conceiv'd; that deſcribes him to us as a Spirit, that has no Communication with Mat- ter, an Infinite Spirit that is every where, an Al- mighty Being, that does all things; that created the World, and ſuſtains it by his Providence; who is the Ruler of all Events, the abſolute Ma- ſter of all things, the Judge of Men and Angels.

A Book, which clearly unfolds to us, what human Reaſon would never have diſcover'd but very imperfectly, which never pronounces any Cenſures, nor gives any Cenſures, but what the Conſcience finds to be moſt juſt; that promiſes nothing but what the Conſcience deſires; that

threatens nothing but what the Conſcience dread
And does it not thence appear, that the Auth
of the Conſcience is the Author of this Book.

A Book, that humbles Man before God, b
giving him to underſtand his emptineſs, his pro
found Wretchedneſs, his natural Corruption an
Sin: That romages the very Secrets and En
trenchments of our Souls, to ſhew us our con
ceal'd Vices, our Vanity, our Pride, our Self
Love, our Love of the World, our Love of Re
venge, the Seeds of Incredulity and Prophaneſ

A Book, that combats all ſorts of Sins, no
one excepted, not ſo much as the ſlighteſt, an
ſeveral that were unknown to the moſt auſtere
Sects of Philoſophers; not ſo much as a Glance
or a Thought eſcapes it; it aſſails all the Moti
ons of Concupiſcence, and all Appearances o
Evil.

A Book, that is not contented to preſcribe u
an exteriour Holineſs, but which requires that
our Souls ſhould be as pure as our Bodies, and
that we ſhould exalt our Virtue to an Heroick
Degree, and be like God.

A Book, that requires that we ſhould have no
other Rule but the Law and Will of God, and
no other End but his Glory, and which exacts
from us, that we ſhould principally, and above
all things in the World, love the Author of our
Being, and that we ſhould love our Neighbour
as our ſelves.

A Book, that has nothing of Contradiction in
all the Parts of it; and which preſents to our
Eyes the *Idea* of a Wiſdom, like to that which is
obſerv'd in this vaſt Univerſe; tho' they who

wrote

wrote it, never had any communication one with another, but were ſeparated by long Intervals of Ages, which ſhews that they were all inſpir'd with the ſame Spirit, and that they had a Sovereign Maſter over 'em, who preſided over the whole Work.

A Book, which has foretold extraordinary Events before they happen'd; and with ſo much certainty, that you would rather take it to be a recital of things paſt, than a prediction of things to come; which ſhews us, that it ſprings from a Spirit, before which all things are preſent, which ſees all things, and which clearly ſhines in the darkneſs of Futurity, in regard that nothing happens which it has not ordain'd.

A Book which having diſcover'd to Man that he is criminal, and guilty before an Infinite Majeſty, which muſt be aton'd, teaches him afterwards the true means by which he was reconcil'd to his Judge, and ſhews him a Divine Perſon, that deſcends from Heaven to take upon him human Nature like his own, who under that Nature ſuffers a cruel Death; who by that Death ſatisfies the Juſtice of God, extinguiſhes the Heat of his Wrath, and makes an Atonement for our Sins, which the Blood of Bulls and Goats, nor all the Purifications of the Law were never able to expiate.

A Book, that appeaſes all the Troubles of the Soul, which all the Books in the World were never able to do; which ſecures us againſt all our Terrors, cauſed by the conſideration of our Sins, the Thoughts of Death, and of a Judgment to come, and fills us with that Peace and Com-

fort, which neither can be expreſs'd nor conceiv'd.

A Book, wherein the Doctrine contain'd, ſupplies all the neceſſities of the Soul, and ſatisfies all her deſires; for there is no queſtion to be made, but that a Book, where our Soul, whoſe Deſires are infinite, finds plenary Satisfaction, muſt be the Production of a Deity, who being only able to know what we would deſire, is only able himſelf alone to content us.

A Book, the Doctrine of which produces ſuch extraordinary Effects, that when it is once receiv'd into our Hearts, there is nothing able to ſhake our Conſtancy and our Faith; no, not the moſt cruel of Torments.

A Book, whoſe Doctrine has been receiv'd into the World, maugre all the Efforts of the Devil, tho' it were only divulg'd by Fiſhermen and Toll-gatherers, and for Enemies met with the moſt Eloquent Orators, the moſt refin'd Philoſophers, moſt Potent Kings and Emperors, who perſecuted, and put to the moſt cruel of Torments, thoſe that preach'd it.

A Book, that has been confirm'd by an infinite number of Miracles, and by the Blood of a vaſt number of Martyrs of all Orders, of both Sexes, of all Conditions, of all Ages.

Laſtly, *A Book*, that to this very day preſerves its priſtine Veneration, tho' no endeavours have been omitted to obliterate it, while ſo many Works have periſh'd, which one would have thought would have endur'd as long as the Sun.

If this be not the Work of God, let 'em tell us what is a Divine Book, or let 'em ſhew us any

any others, wherein all these Characters meet together. But that's more than ever they will be able to do.

'Tis certain then, that God is reveal'd to Men, and that this Revelation is found in the Books of the Old and New Testament.

CHAP. XII.

Of the Clearness of the Holy Scripture.

THere are some Men, who acknowledge the Divinity of the Scripture; but they say 'tis so obscure, that no body can discover by it which is the true Religion; that there never was any Heretick but vaunted of the drawing his Paradoxes from the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles. So that no Man can be confident from thence, what Religion to fix upon; because all the Religions in the World are not equally to be prov'd by the Holy Scripture. According to which Opinion, we may as well say, that the Oracles of God are like those of the Sybils, and that it fares with the Holy Ghost as with the *Apollo* of the Pagans, whose Answers were so obscure, that they might well be taken in two opposite Senses.

I do not, however, believe that they who are of this Opinion, will presume to maintain, that Paganism and Mahometism can be prov'd by Scripture, or that Judaism is to be found in the Books of the New Testament. And therefore they must acknowledge, that it ought not to be

an indifferent Thing to 'em, whether they b
Turks, Pagans, or Jews; but that they ought
embrace the Christian Religion. 'Tis one poi
gain'd then, that we have brought 'em to b
Christians; but we must not stop there. Certain
ly they who assert the Scripture to be so obscure
that they cannot apprehend thereby which is th
true Religion, have a strange Idea of God. Fo
God has given us the Scriptures to some end
This they cannot deny, unless they will doub
of the Wisdom of the most Perfect Being. Thi
End he teaches us himself by his Servants. *A
things*, says St. *Paul*, Rom. 15. 4. *were written f
our Instruction, to the end, that through Patience a
Consolation in the Holy Scriptures, we might ha
hope.* And the same Apostle declares, 2 *Tim.* 3
16, 17. *That the whole Scripture is divinely inspir'd
and profitable for Teaching, Convincing, Correctin
and Instructing according to Justice, to the end th
Man of God may be accomplish'd, and perfectly in
structed in every good work.* But I beseech ye, wha
Instruction, what Consolation can a Man re
ceive from a Book so obscure as the Scripture
if what our *Indifferent Men* assert be true? O
can a Work of that nature accomplish a Man o
God? 'Tis the Pleasure of God that we should
have recourse to his Word, as to the Rule of our
Faith and our Manners; the Apostles anathe
matize those that teach any other Doctrine, and
command the Faithful not to hold communicati
on with such sort of People, and pronounce the
Peace of God upon all those that walk according
to that Rule. But how is it possible that this
Book can serve for a Rule, if it be so extreamly
obscure?

obſcure? And why ſhould *Anathema's* be thunder'd out againſt all thoſe that teach any other Doctrine than what is contain'd therein, if we cannot preciſely know what it is that it teaches?

Either God could not clearly reveal himſelf to Men, or elſe it was not his Pleaſure ſo to do. Can it be ſaid, that he could not? What is impoſſible to the Father and Author of Light, who himſelf has placed the Sun and the Stars in the Firmament, to enlighten the whole World? Can it be ſaid, that it was not his Pleaſure? How! Would not the Father of Mercy, whoſe Goodneſs is Infinite, vouchſafe to make his Will clearly known to Men, to the end they may pay him faithful Obedience? If ſo, wherefore does he threaten Pains eternal to thoſe that diſobey him, and believe not in his Word?

I muſt confeſs, there are many things obſcurely deliver'd in holy Scripture. It contains peculiar Depths and Myſteries. And it was the Pleaſure of God it ſhould be ſo, to humble our lofty Reaſon puſt up with Knowledge; to waken our Minds, that fall aſleep when we meet with no difficulty; to oblige us to pray, meditate, and labour; make us the more earneſtly wiſh for that day when we ſhall be fill'd with the knowledge of all things the moſt obſcure. But if there be things obſcure and difficult in Scripture there are others that are moſt clear and eaſie. It proportions it ſelf to all, and offers it ſelf to all. There is in it a Simplicity that debaſes it ſelf to the moſt Simple, and a Loftineſs that exerciſes the moſt Learned. All indifferently drain from it; but far from being able to

empty

empty it by filling our selves, we always leave behind Abysses of Knowledge and Wisdom, which we adore, without being able to comprehend 'em. *Thus the Loftiness of it astonishes the Haughty; it awakes the Slothful by the Importance of the Matter concerning which it treats: The Difficulties contain'd in it exercise the Industry, and it nourishes the Wise with its Illuminations,* according to the saying of St. *Austin*; which is that which St *Gregory* very well explain in his Letter to the Archbishop of *Seville*, when he sent him his Morals upon *Job*. *As the Word of God*, says he, *inclose Mysteries able to exercise the Wits of the most clear-sighted; so it also contains clear and evident Truths, proper to feed the simple and less Learned. Outwardly it has wherewithal to give Milk to Babes, and within her secret Folds and Concealments sufficient to ravish with admiration the sublimest of human Wits; like a River so shallow in some places that a Lamb may wade over, and in others deep enough for an Elephant to swim.* And in the Preface to the 20th Book of his Morals, he thus expresses himself:

" The Scripture is incomparably superior to all " other Doctrine; not only for that it brings us " Tidings of nothing but certain Truths; not " only because it calls us to a heavenly Coun- " try, because it changes the Hearts of those that " read it, by withdrawing 'em from Terrestrial " Desires, and enflaming 'em with a Desire of " Heaven; but also for that at the same time that " it exercises the more Intelligent and Perfect " with obscure Texts, it carresses and comforts " the more imperfect and feeble Understandings with

" with the ſweetneſs and eaſineſs of its Precepts.
" It is neither ſo obſcure as to ſcare Men from
" reading it, nor ſo eaſie to be underſtood, as
" to incur Contempt. The more familiar it is,
" the leſs it diſrelilhes; the more Men meditate
" upon it, the higher Value they put upon it.
" It aſſiſts our Souls by the Simplicity of Words,
" and the Sublimity of the Senſe which is there-
" in contain'd; and ſeems to grow and exalt it
" ſelf by degrees, as they that read it raiſe
" themſelves and grow in Underſtanding. So
" that the moſt ignorant, and they that have the
" meaneſt Parts underſtand ſomething in it, and
" the Learned always meet with Novelty. To
which we may add what St. *Auſtin* ſays, That it propoſes to us whatever is moſt neceſſary for the Conduct of our Lives; that it explains and illuſtrates it ſelf, by expounding clearly to us in ſome parts, what it delivers but obſcurely in others. This pious Biſhop every where inſinuates, that the *Scriptures* manner of teaching is proportionable to all ſorts of Conditions, and to the Underſtanding of Readers the moſt ſimple, and of meaneſt Capacities; that it invites all Men by a plain and ſimple Diſcourſe to ſeek therein, wherewith to nouriſh themſelves with apparent Truths, and wherewith to exerciſe themſelves in the diſcovery of thoſe that are conceal'd; that if it puts to ſhame the Vanity of the Haughty, by reaſon of the ſublimity of it, to which they cannot reach; if the Depth of it affrights and terrifies thoſe that ſtrive to penetrate into it; it nouriſhes by virtue of thoſe Truths wherewith it is repleniſh'd, the moſt exalted Souls, and affords

fords Children that Food which is proper for 'em, thro' the Familiarity wherewith it ſpeaks.

To be convinc'd of the Clearneſs of the Scriptures, there needs no more than to reflect upon what is taught us therein. Does it not clearly teach us to know an Eternal God, ſoveraignly Good, moſt Wiſe, moſt Potent, and moſt Juſt, who has expanded the Heavens and laid the Foundations of the Earth by his Almighty Power; who ſuſtains all things by his Word, who has created Men and Angels, who preſerves 'em, and is to judge 'em? Does it not clearly ſhew us the profound Miſery of Man, his Corruption, his Sin, his Inability to free himſelf from the ſad Condition he is in? Does it not clearly ſhew us what Chriſt has done for us to deliver us out of this Inconvenience; how he came into the World to put on our Nature; how he died for our Sins; how he he roſe for our Juſtification; how he aſcended glorioufly into Heaven, to prepare a Place for us; and how he is to return to open our Tombs, and to raiſe us to his eternal Sanctuary? Does it not clearly tell us what Bleſſings this Divine Saviour has merited for us, Pardon for our Sins, our Peace with God, the Gift of his Spirit, Salvation, eternal Redemption, and infinite Glory? Laſtly, does it not clearly ſhew us what God requires from us, Faith, Repentance, Hope, Charity, Patience, and all thoſe Virtues which we ought to put in practiſe, and all thoſe Vices from which we ought to abſtain.

Let Men judge after all this, whether they have any reaſon to accuſe the Holy Scriptures of Obſcurity. Certainly, if there be any obſcure places,

places, it ought to be acknowledg'd, that whatever is necessary for our Knowledge, is clearly explain'd. So that 'tis the same thing with the Holy Scripture as with the Book of Nature; both contain things which all the World may know; others require Application and Study; others cannot be comprehended.

But is it not true, say our *Indifferent Men*, that all Heresies may be prov'd by Scripture? I confess, that the Hereticks boast their drawing their Opinions from Divine Sources, the more cunningly to deceive those that they have a mind to seduce, Such were *Arrius*, *Nestorius*, *Eutyches*, *Macedonius*, *Socinus*, and an infinite Number of others. But tho' these Hereticks vaunted their having asserted nothing but what they extracted from Divine Writings; 'tis false that their Proofs are solid, and that they have any reason to infer from thence, that the Scripture is so obscure, that all sorts of Opinions may be drawn from thence This only ought to engage us to take all the care imaginable to understand it aright; not to pursue our own Prejudices; not to expound the Scripture according to our own Passions. Not to read it on purpose to pick out Opinions which we have already invented; but such as we ought to have; to examine well the Meaning of the Holy Spirit, and the end which he proposes to himself; to compare Scripture with Scripture; and not to study it with a design to set up new Opinions to signalize our selves in the World, and gain Disciples; but only with a prospect of advancing in the Knowledge of the Mysteries of our Salvation, and in the study of Piety.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Against those who believe, that although the Truth be clearly explain'd in Scripture, yet that it ought to be Indifferent to us what Religion we embrace.

WE have hitherto disputed against those that will not acknowledge the Divinity of Scripture, or who would make it useless to us. Now our main Business is, to contend with those who agree, that the Truth is sufficiently explain'd in Scripture; but still they believe that we have no occasion to torment our selves about the Choice of a Religion; or at least, they live as if they believ'd so. This sort of *Indifferent Men* is very numerous; so that 'tis but just, that we should apply our selves a little to refute 'em.

I draw my first Argument against 'em from hence, that we ought always to prefer Truth before a Lye; and that we ought always to embrace that Truth, when we have once attain'd to the Knowledge of it. For if it be so, then it follows of necessity, that all Religions ought not to be Indifferent.

It will be no difficult thing to apprehend the force of this Inference, if it be but consider'd, that all Religions being contrary the one to the other, and still accusing each other of Falshood, it must be necessarily concluded, that Truth is in one of these Religions, and Falshood in the rest. If then we ought to prefer Truth before Falshood, we ought to abide in that Religion where Truth

shall

shall be found, and avoid all the rest as so many Sects.

This Proposition, That Truth is always to be preferr'd before Falshood, and that we ought to embrace the Truth when we have once attain'd to the Knowledge of it, seems to have no need of Proofs. For where is that Man who will presume to aver that Truth is not to be prefer'd before Falshood? Had God reveal'd to us which Sect of Philosophers is the true one, there is no Person but would willingly submit. 'Tis for the finding out these Philosophical Truths, that the Learned read with so much Application what the ancient Philosophers have written, and what the Moderns have discover'd, and 'tis with that design that they make so many Experiments at this day. Now then, if it be true in things that concern Philosophy, and which are of no use in reference to Salvation; how much more ought we to love Truth in matters of Religion, where our soveraign Good lies at stake! More especially, since God has taught us what is true, what is false, what pleases, and what offends him. The Love of Truth seems to be born with us, so that even Children love it. 'Twas so highly esteem'd among the Pagans, that their Authors make no scruple to assert, that 'tis the richest Present that God ever made Mankind; that it renders Mortals equal to God; and that if a Soul and Body were to be attributed to the Deity, Truth must be allow'd him for the Soul, and Light for the Body. They also deemed themselves so happy, when they found it out, that they offer'd Hecatombs to their Gods, to return

return 'em Thanks for the Diſcovery of ſo precious a Treaſure. Who would not be aſtonithed then, that in the Chriſtian World, there ſhould be Perſons ſo daring as to maintain, that in Religion Falſhood might be ſometimes preferr'd before Truth; tho' upon all other occaſions of Life they prefer Truth before Falſhood, and take no delight in being deceiv'd. Their Crime is alſo ſo much the greater, for that God is the Author of Truth, and the Devil the Father of Lyes: So that no Man can prefer Falſhood before Truth, but he muſt prefer the Devil before God; which is not a thing to be thought of without Horror.

Our *Indifferent Men*, that very well perceive the force of this Argument, make uſe of all their Wit to anſwer it.

I. They ſay in the firſt place, that there is no Religion which has not ſome Truths; and therefore they, who upon ſome occaſions, and as their Intereſts require, embrace new Religions, cannot be ſaid to embrace Falſhood before Truth, becauſe they always meet with the choiceſt and moſt eſſential Truths in all ſorts of Religious Societies.

This firſt Anſwer, or rather Evaſion, is very abſurd; for the preferring Religions where there are ſome Truths, but withal very great and groſs Errors, before a Religion which is pure, and which teaches us all the moſt neceſſary Truths, is a manifeſt preferring of a Lye before Truth; and this is that which our *Indifferent Men* do.

Now that they may ſee how much they are deceiv'd, I beſeech 'em to conſider,

1. That

1. That those Truths which are obſerv'd in all Religions, are ſtiff'd in certain Sects, with an innumerable company of Errors, which are difficult to be diſcover'd.

2. That thoſe general Truths, to ſpeak properly, conſtitute no particular Religion.

Every Religion, if I may be permitted to ſay ſo, has a *Genus*, and a *Difference*. The *Genus* of all Religions are thoſe principal Truths which are known to all Men, but that which makes the diſtinction, is either the Teaching of other Truths or Errors. So that the principal Truths are not the reaſon that a Religion is ſuch a Religion; but either Errors, and then the Religion is falſe; or other Truths, which are not join'd to the former, and then the Religion is true. As that which makes a Man to be a Man, is not his *Animality*, or his being a Creature; that's his *Genus*; but it is his Reaſon which makes him a Rational Creature. So they who prefer a falſe Religion before a true one, cannot excuſe themſelves by ſaying, that that ſame very Religion has ſome Truths; becauſe thoſe Truths, as I have ſaid already, to ſpeak properly, conſtitute no Religion.

But our *Indifferent Men* will ſay, that if we ought always to prefer Truth before a Lye, we ought then to quit a Religion wherein we find ſome Errors.

I anſwer, Firſt, That if there be any Religion purer than that which we profeſs, we ought not to be aſham'd of quitting our Religion, to embrace another. But in the ſecond place, I ſay, we ought to diſtinguiſh between the Errors. There are ſome which are Capital and Mortal, which

which creep into our Worship and our Manners, which discompose and overturn the very Foundations of Christianity; but there are others which are not altogether incompatible with Piety; as there are likwise two sorts of Truths; the one which are of highest Importance, of which we cannot be ignorant, and yet be sav'd; others which are not so necessary; so that without the knowledge thereof, we may one day obtain Salvation. 'Tis certain, that we ought to abandon a Communion, which destroys essentially the Service of God, and which continues obstinate in Errors, directly opposite to the Salvation of Mankind. But we may be stedfast to a Religion, wherein are only some scatter'd Errors of small Importance, contenting our selves with not approving those Errors; as in civil Society we refrain from Familiarity with those Persons whom we find to be notoriously vicious, because that a correspondency with such Persons would be a stain to those that make Profession of Honour and Virtue, But with all mildness we bear with the Defects of those Persons, who not being perversly wicked, retain the tinctures only of human Frailty.

2. In the second place, they say, that we ought to prefer Truth before a Lye, but that we ought to prefer Peace before Truth. This is an Evasion that meets with no better luck than the former? 'Tis true, that God loves Peace, but such a Peace as is conjoin'd with Truth, because he is no less the God of Truth than the God of Peace, and for that Peace without Truth is a Conspiracy against God; so that War is to be

preferr'd

preferr'd before a Peace that ſeparates us from God. This is no more than what the Pagans themſelves acknowledg'd; and if they have ſaid that Peace is the moſt excellent thing in the World, they have likewiſe aſſerted, that we ought never to commit an unjuſt or baſe Act for the enjoyment of it. The love of Peace ought only to encline us to tolerate thoſe Correſpondences that are not guilty of capital Errors, and ſuch as are incompatible with our Salvation. And therefore we cannot conſent with thoſe ancient Authors, who made ſuch a noiſe about innocent Opinions, as if they had over-turn'd all Chriſtianity. As *Philaſtius*, who lookt upon thoſe as very great Hereticks, who attributed the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* to St. *Clement* and St. *Barnabas*, and not to St. *Paul*; and thoſe who did not not believe that *David* compos'd the 150 *Pſalms*. We cannot approve Pope *Victor*, who for a petty Queſtion excommunicated the Churches of *Aſia*, by that means diſmembring the Great and Glorious Body of Jeſus Chriſt; which was very well repreſented to him by *Irenæus*; and we believe, as that Biſhop did, that for the ſake of Peace, it is much better to bear with the petty Defects of the Church, than to violate the Peace of it by correcting the Church; in regard the Miſchief of the Rupture is incomparably much greater than the Fruit which is to be reap'd from the Cenſure of ſuch an Error. But the love of Peace ought never to oblige us to prefer Communions, full of Errors, before another which is much more pure; becauſe nothing ought to be dearer to us than Truth, and for that we ought always

to

to remember what St. *Paul* says, that we never ought to do Evil that Good may come of it. To which we may add, that Truth of it self is not contrary to Peace, and that it is only by accident, that it is the occasion of Wars and Commotions. 'Tis not Truth, but the Corruption of Men, which causes War, and is the Fuel of Discord.

3. They will say, in the third place, that God always pardons the Good Intention, and therefore he will not deny Salvation to those who prefer Peace before Truth, because they think they please God in doing so. This third Objection is refuted very easily by the same Scripture, which teaches us, that a Good Intention is not sufficient to justifie our Actions before God, when we do that which he has forbid us to do. And to be convinc'd of this, there needs no more than to read the History of *Saul*. God had commanded him to exterminate the *Amalekites* in such a manner as he enjoin'd him: Nevertheless, he spar'd the best of the Oxen, and the best of the Sheep to Sacrifice to the Lord. One would have thought there had been nothing blameworthy in this Action. Nevertheless, *Samuel* gives him a terrible Reprimand. *Has the Lord*, said he, *as great delight in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat of Rams. For Rebellion is as the sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry, because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, he has also rejected thee from being King.* Thus you see how his good Intention was rewarded. To this we may

may add the Hiſtory recited 1 *King.* 13. A Man of God was ſent to *Bethel* to prophetie againſt the Altar of *Jeroboam*; he performed exactly the Command which had been given him; and becauſe that God had forbid him to eat and drink in that Country, he would not enter into *Jeroboam*'s Palace. But meeting an old Prophet in his return, who aſſur'd him that an Angel had commanded him from the Eternal, to carry him back to his Houſe, and to give him to eat, the Man of God ſuffer'd himſelf to be over-rul'd, and went and Din'd with the Prophet. He thought that that was no violation of the Firſt Order he had receiv'd, becauſe he made no queſtion of the Truth of what was told him: His Intention was only to obey the Eternal. Nevertheleſs, God call'd this Action Rebellion; and at the ſame moment caus'd the old Prophet that had brought him back, to pronounce to him the Sentence of his Death, which was afterwards executed by a Lion. To teach us not only that there is no Authority which ought to oblige us to violate the Commands of God; but alſo that our good Intentions are not ſufficient for our Juſtification. The Hiſtory of *Uzzah*, deſcrib'd, *Sam.* 2. 6. confirms the ſame Truth. This Man, ſeeing that the Oxen that drew the Ark, drew it all a one ſide, and fearing that Auguſt Symbol of the Preſence of God ſhould fall, ſtretch'd forth his Hand to hold it. There is no queſtion to be made, but that his Intention was Good. Nevertheleſs, God ſmote him, and he died upon the ſpot, becauſe that none but the Prieſts and Levites were to touch the Ark. After

all

all this, let our *Indifferent Men* flatter themſelves with their good Intentions. The Jews believ'd they offer'd a pleaſing Sacrifice to God, in putting the Chriſtians to Death. But can it be imagined, that their good Intentions were acceptable to God? St. *Paul*'s Intention was good when he perſecuted the Church; but was that Intention ſufficient to juſtifie him? He does not think ſo himſelf, ſince he acknowledges his Sin, and confeſſes, that if God had given him Grace, 'twas the moſt illuſtrious Proof of his Clemency. 1 *Tim.* 1.

CHAP. XIV.

Three Arguments againſt the Indifferent Men.

I Draw a Second Argument againſt thoſe who defend Indifferency of Religions from hence, that the Scripture cauſes us to look upon it as a great Crime, for a Man to abandon the Truth to the knowledge of which he has once attain'd; and as a Crime that ought to be ſeverely puniſh'd. For it would never ſpeak in that manner if it were true, that it was lawful to Sacrifice Truth for Peace. There needs no more than to read the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 6. v. 4, 5, 6. *For is it poſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good Word of God and the Powers of the World to come; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance.*

Seeing

eing they crucifie to themselves the Son ye after me, fresh, and put him to open shame. Can Pe*ss and fol-* painted out in blacker Colours than to com*pot his* em with those that crucifie the Son of God? They are also much more to be blam'd; for they who nail'd to the Cross the Saviour of the World, had no knowledge of him; but these men crucifie him, well knowing who he is. The first put him to Death in mortal Flesh, but the second crucifie him in Glory and Immortality. The Apostle shews us yet more clearly the Enormity of their Sin, and the Punishment which they deserve in the tenth Chapter of the same Epistle: *For if we sin,* says he, *wilfully, after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sins; but a certain fearful looking for Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries. He that despis'd* Moses's *Law, died without Mercy, under two or three Witnesses. Of how much surer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctify'd, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of Grace? For we know him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, and I well recompence, saith the Lord.* And again, *The Lord shall judge his People. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.* Is it possible that St. *Paul* should thus discourse, if there were any reasons to induce a Man to forsake the Truth, without stirring, and without being afraid of the Judgments of God.

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quit the Truth voluntarily, and for t
haps it may be thought, that he discou
not here of those who forsake the Relig
which they think most pure, to avoid the M
chiefs they might suffer by it, but only of th
who quit their Religion without any necessi
there needs no more than to read the follow
Verses, where he exhorts the faithful *Hebrew*
suffer as they had done, rather than renounce
Truth: *But call to remembrance the former day*
which after ye were illuminated ye endured a g
fight of Afflictions; partly while ye were ma
Gazing-stock, both by Reproaches and Afflict
and partly while ye became the Companions of t
that were so us'd. Cast not away therefore
Confidence, which has great Recompence of Rew
For ye have need of Patience, &c.

Which gives me an occasion to proceed
second Proof, which confirms what we have
and is taken from the Exhortations of Script
to die for the Truth. In a word, it would
a great piece of Cruelty, to impose upon M
Yoak so heavy, without any necessity, and
engage 'em to suffer all sorts of Cruelties rat
than renounce the Truth, if it might be so
times abandon'd without a Crime. The Life
Men who are made after the Image of God,
who have been redeem'd by the Blood of
Son, is it so meanly to be priz'd, that they sho
be oblig'd to expose it without compulsive R
sons? How comes it then to pass, that Ch
exhorts us so often to carry his Cross? Whe
proceeds it that it is the first Lesson that
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gives his Disciples, *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me*, Mat. 16. 24. *And he that taketh not his Cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his Life shall lose it; and he that loses his Life for my sake, shall find it*, Mat. 10. v. 38, 39. Whence comes it that the Apostles so often repeat the same Exhortations? Wherefore do they command us to bear the Reproach of Christ, and to follow the Examples of those that were ston'd, saw'd, or slain by the Sword, who have wander'd in Desarts, upon Mountains, and lurk'd in Dens and Caverns of the Earth? Would wise Men, and inspir'd by God, speak thus, were it an indifferent thing what Religion a Man profess'd?

To this Argument I shall add another which is taken from a Passage of St. *Paul*, where that same Doctor of the Gentiles pronounces Anathema's upon all those that should preach any other Gospel than that which he had preach'd himself, though he should be another St. *Paul* descended from Heaven, and one of those Blessed Spirits that continually behold the face of God. *But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto ye, than that ye have received, let him be accursed*, Gal. 1. 8. Certainly, Light is not more opposite to Darkness, than the Words of St. *Paul*, are contrary to the Opinions of those against whom we dispute. The Apostle anathematizes those that preach any other Gospel but that which he has taught. Yet they with whom we dispute, judge it to be an indifferent thing, and of no importance to embrace a Religion

which teaches another Doctrine, than that which St. *Paul* has taught. This Argument is so much the stronger, because the Apostle thunders out his Curse against People, who only went about to join the Religion of Christ to that of *Moses*. Wherein they were far less culpable than our *Indifferent Men*, who would not only join *Moses* with Christ, but Jesus Christ with the World; the Religion of Jesus Christ with other Religions, which are no more than human Inventions, and make it their Business to serve God and *Mammon*.

Nor can I forbear to observe in this place that this Passage absolutely overturns the Opinion of those who imagine, that 'tis enough to believe that Jesus Christ is the promised *Messiah*, and to admit of those Truths which are common to all Religions; but that other things are not of any great Importance; and that there is no necessity of disputing upon that Point. For they who are rebuk'd by St. *Paul*, acknowledged *Jesus* for the *Messiah*, they also confess'd the most Eminent Truths of the Gospel, but he could not persuade 'em altogether to renounce *Moses*, and to lay aside *Circumcision*. Nevertheless, they are Anathematized by St. *Paul*. Judge then what Anathema's that great Apostle would now thunder out, were he to descend from Heaven. Besides, that it might be easie to prove, that should we grant, what is far from us to do, that it is sufficient to believe that Christ is the Promised *Messiah*, whom the Prophets call the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Eternal of Justice, it would follow from thence, that there are Religions which would

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be thought to be Christians, which are False Religions, and which we cannot embrace without offending God.

CHAP. XV.

Against those who believe they may make Profession of a Religion, though they believe it to be false.

THe greatest part of our *Indifferent Men* believe, that without committing any Crime, they may observe the Ceremonies, and practise the Worship of a false Religion; that the World may be brought to an Agreement with Jesus Christ, and that both the one and the other may be serv'd at the same time; like that same Emperor who had in his Closet the Images of Jesus Christ, *Abraham*, *Orpheus*, and *Apollonius*: Or rather like those (of whom *Adrian* speaks in a Letter to *Servianus*, cited by *Vopiscus*) who called themselves Bishops of Jesus Christ, and served the God *Serapis*. This Opinion is dangerous, tho' easie to be refuted, and no less easie to show that Dissimulation in Religion deserves Rebuke and Censure; and that it is condemned by all the sacred Writers.

I. If it were lawful to dissemble and conceal our Thoughts concerning Religion, how comes it to pass, that in the Reign of *Ahab* and *Jezabel*, God owns none for his Servants, but such as had not bowed their Knee to *Baal*, tho' there be no question to be made, but that several of those who prostrated themselves before that

Idol, ador'd in their Hearts the True God of *Israel*?

II. Wherefore Jesus Christ declares expressly, that we cannot be of the Number of his Sheep, and follow Strangers, *John* 10. 4, 5. *And when he putteth forth his own Sheep, he goeth before them, and the Sheep follow him; for they know his Voice; but a Stranger they will not follow, but fly from him; for they know not the Voice of Strangers.*

III. Whence it comes to pass, that this Divine Saviour teaches us, *Mat.* 6. 24. *That we cannot serve two Masters.*

IV. Wherefore does he expressly forbid us *to deny him before Men*, Mat. 10. 33. Had it not been sufficient for him to have said, *Who shall deny me in his Heart?* Why does he express himself so peremptorily, *Whoever shall deny me before Men*, &c. *Who shall be asham'd of Me, of him will I be ashamed.* This is one of those Passages that *Avitus* made use of against *Gundebaud*, who made profession of Arrianism, tho' he acknowledg'd Jesus Christ for a God.

V. Whence comes it to pass, that Jesus Christ, if we desire to be his Disciples, requires of us that we should renounce and forsake our worldly Professions, and break the strictest Ties of Nature that unite us with our nearest Relations, Luke 14. 26. *If any one comes to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple.* And v. 33. *So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.*

VI. Wherefore St. *Paul* calls those Idolaters who committed any one of those Acts which the Pagans practis'd, 1 *Cor.* 10.

VII. If it be sufficient for a Man to believe in his Heart, without making open Profession of the Truth, how comes it that the same Apostle commands us, *to believe in our Hearts, and make Confession with our Mouths unto Salvation*, Rom. 10. 9, 10. And that St. *Peter* would have us *be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asks us a reason of the Hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. 3, 15.

VIII. If it be true, that Man may be faithful, and practise a false Worship, and observe the Ceremonies of a corrupt Religion, then *might he drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils*, contrary to the Saying of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 10. and have Communion with God, yet walk in Darkness, contrary to the Precepts of St. *John*, 1 Ep. c. 1. v. 6. And a Man may have received the good Seed of God into his Heart, and withdraw himself in time of Persecution, contrary to the Doctrine of Christ, *Mat.* 13.

IX. A Man might be an Idolater, and yet be saved, contrary to what the Apostle determines, 1 Cor. 6. that *Idolaters shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.*

X. He may be register'd in the Book of Life of the Lamb, and adore the Beast, contrary to what is written by St. *John*, Apoc. 13. 8. *And all that shall worship the Beast, whose Names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.*

XI. If the Opinion of those, against whom we combat, were true, would St. *John* threaten eternal Torments to the Adorers of the Beast?

Apoc. 14. v. 9, 10, 11. *If any Man worship the Beast and his Image, and receive his Mark in his Forehead, or in his Hand, the same shall drink the Wine of the Wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the Cup of his Indignation, and he shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone in the Presence of the holy Angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*, &c.

XII. The same beloved Disciple would have placed the *Fearful* at the head of those for whom the Lake of Fire and Brimstone is reserved, *Apoc.* 21. 8. Would Jesus Christ threaten to spue the Lukewarm out of his mouth, *Apoc.* 3. 16. For who are the *Fearful* and *Lukewarm*, but they who understand the Truth, yet fearing the Hatred and Cruelty of the World, compose their outward Behaviour in such a manner, that they make a show of approving a Religion, of which they acknowledge the Falshood, Such as have an Orthodox Soul, and Lips of Infidels; who will neither be altogether for Jesus Christ, nor altogether for the World; who divide themselves between the one and the other, and would fain be reconcil'd to both: In a word, who do that which our *Indifferent Men* believe may be done without a Crime.

XIII. Whence comes it to pass, that the Holy Ghost condemns those that halt on both sides, 1 *Kings* 18. 21. *Zephan.* 1. 5. and those that worship and swear by the Lord, yet swear by *Malcham* also?

XIV. Wherefore is it, that the two Apostles St. *Paul* and St. *John*; of whom the one had been

been taken up into Heaven, the other had seen in the Spirit the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, commands us to come out from among the Unfaithful, and from *Babylon*, Apoc. 18. 4. *Come out of her my People*, says the Lord by St. *John*, *that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that we receive not of her plagues.* And 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15, 16, 17. *Be ye not unequally yoak'd with Unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? And what communion hath Light with Darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believes with an Infidel? What agreement has the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the Living God*, &c. *Wherefore come out from among 'em, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive ye.*

XV. Lastly, Wherefore is it, that we are commanded to suffer for Righteousness sake, and that the Spirit of God makes such large Promises to those that suffer Persecution, *Mat.* 5. 10. *Heb.* 12. *James* 5. 10, 11. *Phil.* 1. 29. 2 *Tim.* 2. 11, 12.

I add to all these Proofs, those Passages of Scripture, where the Apostles command us to offer to God not only our Souls, but our Bodies also; and to glorifie him in our Bodies and our Spirit, *Rom.* 12. 1. *I beseech you therefore, Brethren, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service.* And 1 Cor. 6. 20. *For ye are bought with price; therefore glorifie God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.* Is it not a great piece of Sacrilege to refuse the giving of that to

God which belongs to him. He created both our Bodies and Souls, he has redeem'd 'em both, the one in the other; is it not then juſt, that we ſhould conſecrate both to him? Wherefore ſhould we ſeparate what God has join'd, and what he has given us, to the end we ſhould employ it to his Glory? How great a ſin is it, how great a piece of Impiety, to divide our ſelves between God, to whom we owe all things, and the World, to which we owe nothing? To deny our Tongues to God, to whom we owe our Lives; and to be aſham'd of calling our ſelves the Servants and Diſciples of Chriſt, who was not aſham'd to call us his Brethren, and who for our ſakes has ſuffer'd a moſt cruel and ignominious Death.

To demonſtrate yet more clearly the Falſhood of this Opinion, which I labour to deſtroy, I think it convenient to make theſe few Reflections.

The Firſt is, That it is a ſtrange thing, that there ſhould be ſo many People that make no ſcruple of Lying in Religion, which is a thing of the greateſt importance, and the moſt ſacred in the World; in regard that Lying is a Vice unworthy a Man of Honour. The greateſt Debauchees become ſenſible of Remorſe of Conſcience, if they happen to ſwear a Falſhood before a Judge: So true it is, that we have a natural Averſion againſt telling a Lye. Who would not wonder then, that Men who are deſirous of *Reputation*, ſhould not be aſham'd to lie in a thing that is the moſt grave and ſerious in the World; the Concern of God himſelf, of Truth and our own Salvation. If a Subject, who gives but the leaſt

least ſuſpicion of an Intention to revolt from his Prince, and who only lets fall ſome Words that will admit of a bad Conſtruction is handled with ſo much ſeverity, in regard that Royal Majeſty is ſo ſacred, that it is not to be injur'd in any manner whatever, without incurring the guilt of a hainous Crime: What greater Tranſgreſſion can a Man commit, than to make a ſhow of being an Enemy to God and his Truth? What Torments ought not they to expect, who are guilty of ſuch Impiety?

The ſecond Reflection is this, That they who diſſemble in Religion, commit a very great Crime againſt their Brethren, for they incite 'em by their own Example to Apoſtacy, and make 'em believe, that the Religion which they profeſs is the true Religion. So that if they who poiſon the Body, are lookt upon as the wicked'ſt People in the World; how much more criminal are they who poiſon the Soul; who preſent their Brethren the mortal Draught, and make a ſhow of drinking it, to the end that others may not be afraid of ſwallowing it? And what Torments ought they not to fear from Him who threatens to puniſh moſt ſeverely Lyars, and ſuch as give ſcandal to his little Children.

This Remark is ſo much the more neceſſary, becauſe there are ſeveral Perſons who believe, that a Man may abide in a falſe Religion, with a deſign to make known the Truth to thoſe who know it not, wherein they groſly abuſe themſelves. For beſides that, I would willingly ask 'em, whether they can ſpeak it with a ſafe Conſcience, that they only ſtick to the falſe Religion which

which they profeſs, on purpoſe to ſhow the falſhood of it, and whether it be not meerly becauſe they find it more advantageous for their Buſineſs, and for the enjoyment of the Conveniencies of Life; I would put this farther Queſtion to 'em, were the Firſt of theſe the real Motive that detai s 'em, Who is he that has enjoin'd 'em to extend their Charity ſo far as to expoſe themſelves willingly to Damnation, out of hopes to convert others? For where is it that God has promis'd to ſave thoſe who ſhall turn Idolaters to ſave their Brethren? Does not St. *Paul* expreſly ſay, That we ought not to do evil that good may come of it? But ſo far are they from converting others by adhering to a falſe Religion, that quite the contrary, they confirm 'em in their own Opinion, and corrupt many by their bad example. They may make good Hypocrites like themſelves, but very rarely good Chriſtians.

The third Reflection which I add to the two preceding is this, That if Diſſimulation in Religion be permitted, and that it be lawful to embrace that which beſt agrees with our carnal Intereſts, we muſt confeſs, that the Martyrs who have laid down their Lives with ſo much Courage, and ſuffered ſuch cruel Torments, were all Fools and Mad-men, while they rather choſe to loſe their Lives, when there was no neceſſity for it, and periſh in the midſt of conſuming Flames, than to condeſcend to the leaſt complyance, tho' but in outward ſhow, and buckle to their Perſecutors. But God forbid we ſhould deprive thoſe Chriſtian Hero's of their merited Honour,

Honour, and look upon as extravagant the wiſeſt of all Mortals. Have we not more reaſon to call our *Lukewarm*, and our *Fearful* Chriſtians, Fools, who rather chuſe to preſerve their Wealth and Worldly Advantages, then one day to enjoy thoſe Eternal Felicities which God prepares for thoſe that will be faithful to him; who are more afraid of the preſent then the future; of that which can Kill the Body, then of that which precipitates the Soul into Hell: who are more afraid of Death, than of the cruel Torments of Hell; who prefer the World before God, and Time before Eternity.

To theſe three Reflections I ſhall add a fourth, which ſeems to me to be of great Importance, that the Inſide can never be good, when the Outſide is evil. And that it is not poſſible for a Man to deny God with his Lips, but he muſt renounce him in his Heart, when he has had time to reflect upon what he has done. I ſay, when he has had time to conſider with himſelf, that I may not oppoſe the Example of St. *Peter*, whoſe Fears ſo far diſturb'd his Mind, that, quite tranſported beyond himſelf, and only ſtudying which way to avoid the danger that threatned him, he neither remembred Jeſus Chriſt, nor the Promiſe which he had made him.

'Twill be no difficult thing to underſtand this 4th Reflection, if we conſider that 'tis in the Heart that Men take that unhappy and curſed Reſolution to renounce Jeſus Chriſt with their Lips, and that 'tis in their Hearts that they meditate an Accommodation with the preſent Time. 'Tis therefore to no purpoſe for 'em to ſay, that they

reſerve

reſerve their Hearts for God, and that they ſurrender 'em entirely to him, tho' they forſake his Truth; that they do not renounce him with their Hearts, altho' they deny him with their Lips. To talk in this manner, is to deceive themſelves; and they who diſcourſe after this manner, are like a Woman, that ſhould ſay, ſhe had bequeath'd her Heart to her Husband, and only made her Body common to her Lovers: Or to a Man that ſhould rend the Reputation of his Neighbour, or murder him, yet pretend that in his Heart he abhor'd Murder, Backbiting, and Calumny, and that he tenderly lov'd the Perſon whom he had bereft of Life.

They who diſſemble, cannot deny but that the motions of Self-love prevail'd over the Impulſes of the Love of God, becauſe they will neither ſacrifice their Wealth, nor their Eaſe to his Glory. So that if they were always to be judg'd by the Sentiments of their Hearts, they would always deſerve no leſs than Condemnation and Death.

CHAP. XVI.

An Anſwer to ſome Objections.

'TIs but reaſonable now to anſwer ſome Objections which they make us.

The firſt is drawn from that which Jeſus Chriſt ſays, *John* 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and Truth.* Therefore, ſay they, God is ſatisfied with

with the Heart, and with the inside Worship, not requiring exteriour Adoration.

But if this be the Consequence which is to be drawn from the Words of the Saviour of the World, why does he exhort us to own him before Men, to bear his Cross, and to suffer for him? Certainly, if he required no more than the Heart, wherefore does he exact from us an outward Profession, which expoſes us to a thousand Disgraces, and a thousand Sufferings? Is our Life of so little value, that he would have us to be so prodigal of it, when there is no occasion? But what Man of Judgment is there, who does not perceive, that his meaning is only to shew us, what sort of Worship is most pleasing to God, and that it is his pleasure, that under the Gospel we should pay him a Spiritual Worship, abstracted from Matter, and all those Observances which were only proper for the Infancy of the Church; independent from Circumstances of Time, Persons and Places? Whether it be, that God, filling all the World with the Immensity of his Being, is no longer to be ador'd at *Jeruſalem* or *Gerezin* only; or whether it be, that being a Spirit, he is not rightly honour'd by the Oblations of Bulls and Goats. He neither eats their Flesh, nor drinks their Blood; or whether it be, that which way soever you look upon these sorts of Worship, they have no Relation or Correspondence, nor any way suite with the Nature of God; and to speak properly, are no more than Shadows or Types of the true Worship which God requires. This is the sence of these Words; and there needs no more to be convinc'd

convinc'd of it, than to read what goes before. But we must not conclude from thence, that God is satisfy'd with the Adoration of the Heart, while the Body lies prostrate at the feet of a false Deity. This is not a Worshipping God in Truth, but a dividing his Adoration, by bequeathing the inward Worship to God, and the Outward Reverence to some other Object. For Truth is no other than the Conformity of Out side and Inside. He that has the outward Formality without the inward Sincerity, is a Hypocrite; and he who says he has the Inward, without the Exteriour Reality, is a Lyer.

The second Objection is drawn from what St *Paul* says in his Epistle to the *Romans*, Ch. 14. v. 22. *Hast thou Faith? Have it to thy self before God.*

But there needs no more than to read that Passage with attention, and to examine what obliged the Apostle to hold that Argument, for any Man to apprehend, that he speaks, there, of the Belief and Faith of a Believer, that Jesus Christ has set us at full liberty; that he has abolish'd the distinction of Days and Meats, that was observed under the Old Covenat. St. *Paul* therefore means, that if we find our selves in company with weak People, who would be scandalized to see us take our full liberty, it would be better to abstain from the use of those things which God has permitted us, to reserve our Faith to our selves, than to give any scandal: Because the Dispute was only concerning indifferent things: and for that whether we eat or eat not, we commit no sin. But are we thence

to

to conclude, that the same Conduct is to be observ'd in things, the use of which is so far from being Indifferent, that it is absolutely necessary; and such as Jesus Christ recommends to us with so much care; threatning us withal, with eternal Punishment if we neglect 'em. If that Consequence were to be drawn from the Words of St. *Paul*, how comes it to pass that he exhorts us to make Confession with our Mouths unto Salvation. and to lay down our Lives for the Gospel? Certainly if it were sufficient to have faith in the Heart, there would be no necessity of doing good Works. Contrary to the saying of St. *James*, c. 2. v. 14. *What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a Man say he hath Faith, and hath not Works; can Faith save him?* I can hardly think it worth while to refute here the Argument which they draw from another Passage of St. *Paul*, where he exhorts that Men should make Supplications in all places. For he must be blind who understands not, that the Aim of St. *Paul* is only to oppose those Persons, who thought the Virtue and Efficacy of Prayers depended upon the Quality of the Place where they were made. It was a general Errour of the Pagans, and the People of *Israel* made a great Distinction between Places; in pursuance of what God had said, that he would make choice of one certain Place to fix his Name there. The design of St. *Paul* therefore is to teach us, that Jesus Christ had abolish'd the *Mosaick* Pedantism; that there was no longer any distinction to be made of Places for Divine Worship, in regard there was no Corner of the World that was not fill'd with the Presence

Presence of God, and where he did not favourably hear our Vows. But so far was he from pretending that it should be inferr'd from thence, that he forbids all Communion with Idolaters.

The third Objection is taken from the 6th Chapter of *Baruch*, v. 5. and from a Letter which they pretend that *Jeremiah* wrote to those that were to be carried away captive to *Babylon*. "When you shall be enter'd into *Babylon*, you "shall remain there several Years, and a long "time, even till seven Generations: Nevertheless, after that, I will bring ye back in peace. "Now you shall see at *Babylon* Gods of Silver "and Wood, which shall be carry'd upon Men's "Shoulders, and which shall terrifie the Nations. "Take heed that ye become not in any manner "like those Strangers, and that ye be not seiz'd "with the fear of those Gods, when you shall "behold the People before and behind, that shall "adore 'em; but say in your Hearts, Lord, it "is thou alone that art to be ador'd.

In answer to this Argument, I will not examine whether the Book be Canonical or no; tho' all Men agree, that the Jews never look'd upon it to be authentick. That *Meliton*, *Origen*, St. *Hilary*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and *Epiphanius*, make no mention of it, and that St. *Jerom* expresly rejects it, in his Preface upon *Jeremiah*. 'Tis not my Business here to discuss that Question, any farther than as it contributes to refute the Mistake of our Adversaries. For it says expresly, *Take heed of Conforming in any manner whatever to Strangers*. Would he have troubled

led himself with any such Exhortation, had it been lawful for the People without offending God, to proftrate themselves before the Gods of Gold and Silver, only saying in their Hearts, Lord, it is thou alone who art to be ador'd? The enjoyning us to say in our Hearts, that God is only to be ador'd, is that a Permission to worship any other but him? And the Proftrating our selves before an Idol, only saying what *Jeremiah* commands us, is not that a perfect Condemnation of our selves? The Meaning therefore of that Holy Prophet is only to instruct us, that when we behold Idolaters worshipping a counterfeit Deity, if it be not convenient boldly to rebuke their Idolatry, for fear of raising Sedition, it behoves us at least to condemn it in our Hearts, without imitating their Conduct or the Practise of those who behold with delight the Pomp and Magnificence of Idolatrous Worship.

Lastly, They make use what St. *Peter* said to *Cornelius*, and which we read in the 10th Chapter of the *Acts*. *Of a Truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of Persons; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.* But that Man must very unfortunately deceive himself, who sees not that St. *Peter* means no other thing, but that he perceiv'd that Salvation was no longer peculiar to the Nation of the Jews; that it was no longer necessary to be of the Posterity of *Jacob* according to the Flesh, for a Man to be accepted with God; and that there was no longer any

any Distinction between the *Jew* and the *Greek*, the *Scythian* and the *Barbarian*.

This is the sence of those Words. But it is not to be thence inferr'd, that a Man may be accepted with God, let him be of what Religion he pleases. Had St. *Peter* had any such thought, would he have taken so much Pains to convert People to Christianity? Or have exposed himself to the Ill-will of his whole Nation. St. *Paul* holds the same Argument as St. *Peter*, Rom. 10, 12, 13. But he had said before, that with the Mouth confession is made unto Salvation.

CHAP. XVII.

An Answer to the Examples brought from Nicodemus, Naaman, *and St.* Paul.

WE have seen the Passages of which our *Indifferent Men* make use; now let us examine the Examples which they bring.

1. They propose to us the Examples of *Zachary*, *Elizabeth*, *Simon*, St. *John Baptist*, the Blessed Virgin, and Christ himself, who often intermix'd themselves with the Congregation of the Jews, tho' they were very corrupt, and observed the Ceremonies of the Law. But is is apparent that these Examples prove nothing of what they pretend to. I confess, that *Zachary*, that *Elizabeth*, &c. intermix'd themselves with the Assemblies of the Jews, because it was the Will of God that they should pay him their Homage due in his Temple,

ple, and that there was no Command as yet to separate from the Communion of the Jews. They observ'd the Ceremonies of the Law, because those Ceremonies were not then abolished. Jesus Christ was not yet ascended into Heaven. Then wherefore should they not intermix themselves in the Assemblies of the Jews? The Law of *Moses* was there read every Sabbath-day; they read the Prophets; they offer'd the Sacrifices which God had ordain'd; there was no Idolatry in the Worship; they ador'd no other God there but the God of *Israel*. The Scribes and Pharisees constrain'd no body to believe their Expositions of the Law: They could distinguish the wholesom true Doctrine, from the Traditions of false Teachers, and beware of their Leav'n, as Christ exhorted his Disciples. Let 'em now examine what reason they have to bring these Examples.

2. They propose to us the Example of *Nicodemus*, who tho' he were throughly convinc'd of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, durst not give him a Visit in publick, for fear of being expell'd the Synagogue; and the same thing is reported of *Joseph* of *Arimathea*.

Now upon this Example I observe three things. The first is, that tho' *Nicodemus* and *Joseph* of *Arimathea* did not openly take the Part of Jesus Christ, yet they never intermix'd in any Society which God had forbid 'em.

The second thing is, that *Nicodemus*, *Joseph*, and others, who did as they did, are extreamly blam'd in Scripture, *John* 12. 42. *Nevertheless, among the Chief Rulers also many believ'd in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest*

lest they should be put out of the Synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The third thing is, That *Nicodemus* opposed the Resolution which the Pharisees took against Jesus Christ; that *Joseph* would never give his Consent; and that both the one and the other no longer dissembling their Thoughts, at a time when the Apostles themselves forsook Christ, and that the one deny'd him, the other had betray'd him, openly demanded his Body, and caused it to be honourably buried; having the Courage to confess him dead, whom they durst not confess when he was alive.

After these three Remarks, let us compare our *Indifferent Men* with those Illustrious Jews. *Nicodemus* never intermix'd with any forbidden Assembly. Our *Indifferent Men* believe they may do it, and yet commit no Crime. *Nicodemus* and *Joseph* bestow'd a publick Funeral upon our Lord Jesus, and opposed the Counsels which the Pharisees took together in Combination against him. But our *Indifferent Men* are asham'd to speak for the Truth, or to uphold the Cause of Jesus Christ.

So that if *Nicodemus* and *Joseph* are blam'd by St. *John*, at a time when they durst not openly confess Jesus Christ, judge how much more criminal our false *Nicodemites* are, whose Knowledge is much greater than that of the Jews.

They object in the third place, the Example of *Naaman* the *Syrian*, who understanding the True God, forbore not however from entring into the Temple of *Rimmon*, when his Master went thither to pay his Devotions; and they pretend

pretend that *Elisha* the Prophet gave him leave to comply with the King's Worship in prostrating himself as he did.

In answer to this Example, I make these Reflections following.

1. That *Naaman* never demanded of the Prophet that he might be permitted to dissemble his Religion before the King of *Syria*. On the other side he vow'd, and promis'd that he would Sacrifice to no other Deity but the Eternal God. 2 King. 5. 17. *Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy Servant two Mules burthen of Earth? For thy Servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-Offering, nor Sacrifice unto any other Gods, but unto the Lord.*

The second Reflection is, that *Naaman* made but only one Request; not to enter into the Temple of *Rimmon* when he pleased, for that had been a piece of Impiety; but only that it might not be imputed to him for a Crime, if he bow'd in the House of *Rimmon*, when his Master went to worship there, and lean'd on his hand.

These two Reflections already show the Difference between the Conduct of our *Indifferent Men*, and that of *Naaman*. *Naaman* openly declared, that he served the God of *Israel*, and that he would serve none but him. And there is no doubt but that he protested the same thing to his Master, when he related to him the Miracle of his Cure. But our *Indifferent Men* believe, that for their better Security, they may profess the same Religion with Idolaters; and by consequence may have another Object of their Worship than God, when they cry among People who believe

believe that another sort of Religious Worship may be paid to any other Deity. *Naaman* only desir'd that he might be permitted to serve his Master as he was bound in Duty to do; but our *Indifferent Men* require, that they may be permitted to dissemble without any other reason than for their own Convenience and Profit.

Naaman is extreamly troubled in Conscience about paying this Civil Service to his Master, and begs pardon of God, as being afraid of committing a Sin. His Conscience had such an Abhorrency of Idolatry, that he could not brook any thing which had the least Affinity with it. But our *Indifferent Men* make no scruple to give themselves that liberty which he denied himself, and believe they may do that without offending God, which *Naaman* never did; tho' *Naaman* was bred up in Idolatry, and had no other Instruction than what he received from his Cure; whereas our Antagonists clearly know the Will of God; which will not permit us to doubt, but that *Naaman* will rise up in Judgment against 'em, and that thy will undergo severe Punishment.

But in regard our *Indifferent Men* insist very much upon *Naaman*'s desiring that God would pardon him, if he prostrated himself in the Temple of *Rimmon*, when the King his Master lean'd upon his Hand, and upon *Elisha*'s answering him, *Go in Peace*; as if by those Words he gave him leave to do as he desir'd, 'tis necessary to observe in this place,

1. That the Terms in the Original may be understood, as if *Naaman*, after he had made a Vow,

ow, never from thence forward to Worship or ve any other than the True God, had deli-'d himself in this manner: *I beg of the Lord pardon this thy Servant, That when my Master er'd into the House of* Rimmon *to prostrate self there, and that when he lean'd upon my nd, I also prostrated my self; for that, I say, the Lord pardon me.* Reading it in this man-, there is nothing of difficulty in the Story; in gard that according to this Version, he begs don for what is past'd, but not for what is to me.

2. That *Elisha* by those Words, *Go in peace,* ve no Permission to *Naaman*; he only dis-'d him with that same Complemental Form Speech which was then in use among the He-ws.

3. That tho' those Words of the Prophet should ly a Permission, it would only relate to the quest that *Naaman* had made. The *Syrian* only demanded of *Elisha*, whether he could give him two Mules lading of Earth of the y Land; and after that, he had begg'd of , that he would pardon him, if the King thing upon his Hand, he should happen to pro-ate himself, together with him, in the Temple *Rimmon*. *Elisha* therefore answers to the first mand, but not to the second.

4. That tho' the Words should include the Pro-'s Permission, we ought not to conclude from nce, that a Man may be an Idolater, and yet erve his Heart immaculate for God. For that not the Thing which *Naaman* desired of the phet; and tho' the Prophet had granted it,

nevertheless, we never ought to do it. Becau
it is certain, that God has expressly forbid Idol
try, and whatever has the least relation to it;
that if not only a Prophet, but all the Angels
Heaven should say the contrary, we ought t
look upon 'em as *Anathema's*. All that we a
to infer from thence is this, That they who ser
Princes, are permitted to be present at the Cer
monies of their Masters Religion, when t
Duty of their Employment obliges 'em to p
'em any Service. And this is that which *Vale
nian* did, in compliance with the Emperor *J
lian*, when he enter'd into the Temple of *Fortu
and what in the last Age the Elector of *Sax
did, in respect of the Emperor *Charles* V.

I add to these Reflections,

1. That there is some Reason to doubt, wh
that we may be allow'd to practise under t
New Covenant, what might be tolerated und
the Old, in a poor Pagan, whose Knowledge w
very small, and who had had no other Instruct
on, but what the Prophet had given him in h
familiar Conversation. But we may be thoug
to be oblig'd to greater Duties; We, that ha
been bred in the School of Christ, and are e
viron'd with such a Cloud of Witnesses, who r
ther chose to die a thousand times, than to d
any thing that might be ill interpreted.

2. That no Man ought to do that which *Na
man* did, in despite of his Conscience.

3. That if any one be oblig'd to do it, h
ought not to give any occasion for others to be
lieve that he approves what is done in a fal
Reli

eligion. Quite the contrary; he ought to let e World see, that he deteſts it, and abhors the rrors, the Worſhip, the Myſteries and Cere-nonies of it. This is that which *Valentinian* did, or *Theodoret* obſerves, that one day as he was tending upon *Julian* to the Temple of *Fortune*, gave a good Cuff to the Verger that ſprinkled e Holy Water upon all that enter'd, becauſe obſerv'd that a drop of Water had fallen up-n himſelf; and cried out aloud, that he was ntaminated thereby, inſtead of being purify'd, hich ſo provok'd the Emperor, that he ba-iſh'd *Valentinian*: But he remain'd not long in-ile; for within a Year, and ſome few Months terwards, he became Maſter of the Empire imſelf.

Laſtly, I conclude, that it is much the ſafer ay to renounce all thoſe Employments, than to gage our ſelves in Actions contrary to our elief; and that it's better to quit 'em, than to ondolize our Brethren.

In the fourth place, the Example of St. *Paul* objected, who as he teaches us himſelf, 1 *Cor.* 20, 21, 22. *And unto the Jews I became a Jew, at I might gain the Jews; to them that are un-r the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain em that are under the Law; to them that are ithout Law, as without Law (being not without Law God, but under the Law to Chriſt) that I might ain them that are without the Law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I m made all things to all Men, that I might by all eans ſave ſome.* After ſo fair an Example ſet, who is there, ſay they, who would ſcruple to

conform to the Times, to the Place where he lives, and the Persons with whom he converses.

I answer, that no body denies, but that we ought to conform to Time, to Place, and Persons; provided we do nothing against our Conscience, and that we acquit our selves of these Duties which the true Religion exacts from us. We ought to conform with Time and Place in betaking our selves to flight, when we are persecuted; to quit our Country, and change our Habitations, till, like *Joseph*, *Mat.* 2. we understand, that they who seek our Lives are dead. We ought to comply with Persons, to avoid the exposing holy Things to the Prophane, and giving occasion of Scandal to the Weak. Thus St. *Paul* became a Jew to the Jews, observing those Ceremonies among 'em, which were not contrary to the Christian Faith, by circumcising *Timothy*, and causing himself to be shaved at *Cenchreæ*. He was under the Law to those that were under the Law, in abstaining from those Ceremonies that might offend the Gentiles. Lastly, he became weak to the weak, by complying with their Infirmities. Read upon this Subject, *Rom.* 14, 15. *1 Cor.* 8. But that holy Apostle never practised any base or treacherous compliances with any body, only he became all things to all Men, in things permitted and indifferent; you may judge by his manner of reproving St. *Peter*, who trode not aright, but constrain'd the Gentiles to *Judaize*, *Gal.* 2. 14. What then can our Antagonists prove from hence? Let 'em become all things to all Men likes St. *Paul*, we will never blame 'em. But does it follow from

from thence, that we may embrace all Religions, abandon the true one, and profess a false one? like that same *Ecebolus*, who was sometimes Orthodox, sometimes Arrian, sometimes Pagan. God preserve us from any such Thoughts. Had S. *Paul* been of our *Indifferent Men*'s mind, would he have undergone so many Afflictions, expos'd himself to so many Dangers; would he have suffer'd himself to be loaded with so many Chains, or would he have died by the hand of the Common Executioner? No, without doubt. There was nothing more easie for him than to have avoided those bitter and continual Persecutions. He needed have done no more, than to have extoll'd *Moses* to the *Jews*; *Jupiter*, *Mercury*, and the rest of the Counterfeit Deities to the Pagans; and thus he would have pleased all. But then he would not have taught Jesus Christ. He preaches him up every where, though they threaten him with a thousand Torments, in the *Areopagus* at *Rome*, among the Jews and Gentiles, never dissembling his Sentiments: So far from being asham'd of the Gospel of his Divine Saviour, that he preached him both boldly and publickly, and made it his chiefest Glory so to do.

CHAP. XVIII.

An Answer to some Reasons which are brought by our Antagonists.

OUr *Indifferent Men* make some Objections also. In the first place they put the Question, Whether God cannot save People of all sorts of Religions; especially such as confess Jesus Christ, and acknowledge him to be the Son of God, the promised *Messiah*, Crucify'd, Dead, and Risen from the Grave. This Question is ridiculous; for the Business in dispute is not what God can do, nor shall we undertake to set Bounds to his Infinite Mercy. But we cannot believe that he will save those that depart from a *Pure Communion*; who abjure his Truth; who make a publick Profession of doing things which they do not believe, and who die unrepentant in that sad Condition. God has so clearly explain'd himself in this matter, that he must willingly seek his own Destruction, that flatters himself to obtain Mercy, and follows the Footsteps of our *Indifferent Men*.

But, say they, in the second place, is it not a hard case to be despoil'd of our Estates, to be deprv'd of our Honours and Conveniencies of Life; to be banish'd, to renounce our Pleasures, to live in a comfortless and lonely Desart, to be confin'd to a dark and loathsome Dungeon, and to die cruelly by the hand of the Hangman? I grant that this is all unpleasing to the Flesh. But do they not find that God sufficiently recompences

gences those who suffer for his sake? That he gives 'em his Heaven, and gave 'em himself. Whatever the Sufferings are to which the Lord Jesus exposes his Believers and his Members, are they comparable to what he suffer'd himself to purchase our Salvation? Or is there any proportion between them and the Recompence which the Mercy of God bestows upon us; between the Miseries of this Life, and those which we may justly be afraid of after Death; between the Blessings which it is in his Power to bereave us of, and those which he has prepared for us; between the false Pleasures which we are requir'd to renounce, and the solid Pleasures which we hope to enjoy; between the Honours and Dignities which we quit in this World, and those eternal Glories to which we are design'd? 'Tis a hard case to be persecuted, cries the Flesh: but is it not a happy thing to be favour'd of God, to be at peace in our Souls, to be assur'd of the Love of the Father of Heaven, to be Heirs of an eternal Inheritance, to wear one day a Crown of Life, and to enjoy an endless Felicity? 'Tis a hard case to live in Adversity; but is it not infinitely more tedious for a Man to bear about him his Accuser, his Witness, his Judge, and his Executioner; to be gnaw'd by a Worm that never dies, and to enjoy no Repose? It is a terrible thing to be reduc'd to the Condition of *Lazarus*; but it is much more dreadful to be cast headlong into Hell with the wicked Rich Man, while *Lazarus* is receiv'd into *Abraham's* Bosom. It is a hard case for a Man to lay down his Life; but is it not a happiness to lose

it for Jesus Christ's sake, to the end we may live eternally with him? What is it which God requires of us, which the Devil does not exact from his Slaves, tho' they can never expect other from him than eternal Misery; and what we do not frequently do our selves upon wicked Impulses, and to satisfie our Passions? I shall now extend this Discourse any farther: I only beseech God that our *Indifferent Men* and *Libertines* may seriously reflect upon it.

CHAP. XIX.

Against those who maintain, that we ought to believe what the Magistrates will have us believe.

I Come now to those who hold, that the Sovereign Law, which is to be follow'd as well in Sacred, as in Civil Matters, is the Law of Magistrates, and that every thing is to be subjected to their Commands. This was the Sentiment of of an Author famous once in *England*, and who has still but too many Followers. He believ'd that the *Israelites* were bound to receive for the Law of God, what *Abraham* deliver'd to 'em for the Law of God; and that the Publick Laws supply the Place of Conscience to all Men. He said moreover, explaining those Words of *Mat.* 10. 32. *Who shall deny me before Men, &c.* That a Subject was not to be blam'd for renouncing Christ, if he were thereto constrain'd by his Prince. I compare the Author of this Opinion, to that same wretched Flatterer, who formerly

formerly propoſed, in favour of his Prince, a Declaration, importing, that nothing ſhould be look'd upon as juſt, but what the King requir'd.

Not much unlike to this was the Practice of thoſe Hereticks, which a certain Philoſopher upbraided, that they ador'd not God, but the Imperial Pomp, changing Opinions according to the Sentiments of that Prince under whom they liv'd. This is an impious Opinion, and it is very eaſie to ſhew the Falſhood of it.

In a word, were there any Ground for this Opinion, there would be no longer any other Deity to be acknowledg'd but the Magiſtrate, under whom we are born Subjects, and we ought not to admit of any other Rule for the Conduct of our Lives, and our Manners, than the Laws of Princes. There would be no need of informing our ſelves what God has reveal'd to Men, or what his Pleaſure is, but what the Magiſtrate commands us. We muſt expound the Scripture according to the Sentiments of the Magiſtrate under whom we live, and not as it expounds it ſelf; as that *Emperor* pretended, who by an Edict ordain'd that a certain Paſſage of *Scripture* ſhould be explain'd according to his Senſe: We ought to obey em in deſpight of our Conſciences and the Light of Right Reaſon; and *Daniel* is extreamly to be blam'd, who refus'd to obey the impious Edicts of the Prince under whom they liv'd. Who can hear ſuch Diſcourſes as this, without trembling? Beſides, is it not ridiculous to think that Men are bereft of their Reaſon, and the knowledge of Good and Evil, ſo ſoon as they liſt themſelves in a Society, while the ſame Knowledge reſides

only in Sovereigns; or that we should be bound to do that which we know to be a Sin.

But, say they, does not the Scripture command us to obey the Magistrate? 'Tis very true, nor does any body deny it. We also farther believe, that we ought to be obedient to higher Powers, tho' they make profession of a contrary Religion to ours; according to the Example not only of the Apostles, but also of the Fathers of the *Church*, and particularly of St. *Cyprian*, who being accus'd for having conspir'd against *Cæsar*, because he was a Christian, and the Emperor was a Pagan, made answer, *We Christians are so far from Conspiring against our Emperors, that we put up our Supplications every day for* Cæsar, *because he is our Prince, altho' he worship other Deities than we do.* But if we believe that it behoves us to obey Magistrates, we add withal, that we are not bound to pay our Obedience to 'em, but in things which are not contrary to the Word of God. We believe that we ought to give to *Cæsar* that which is *Cæsar*'s, but withal that we ought to give to God that which is God's, as Jesus Christ instructs us. When the Law of the Prince agrees with the Law of God, then we obey him without scruple; but when the Prince's Law does not correspond with the Law of God, we make no difficulty to assert, that it is a piece of Impiety to obey that Law, because it is better to obey God than Man, as the Apostle enjoins us. What greater Affront can be put upon God, than to obey Men rather than him, to observe human Laws, and violate Divine Commands. He is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords;

Lords; when he opens his Mouth, he alone ought to be hearkned to, and we ought not then to heed what Men ordain, when it is contrary to the Command of our Great Master. The Companions of *Daniel* were highly commended for refusing to prostrate themselves before the Statue of *Nebuchadnezzar*, though that haughty Prince had ordained it under severe Penalties; but the *Israelites* are blamed for having follow'd *Jeroboam*, and for having abandon'd the Temple of the True God. This Doctrine has been almost universally received by all Christians, and I could cite upon this Subject, *Tertullian*, *St. Ambrose*, *St. Chrysostome*, *St. Austin*, &c. The Popes Decretals are in express Terms: *If the Lord Commands Things which are not Contrary to the Scripture, let the Servant be subject to his Lord; but if he Commands things Contrary, let him obey the Lord of the Soul, not the Lord of the Body. If the Emperor Commands what is Good, execute the Command; if it be Evil, answer, God is to be obey'd before Man.* This is that which was practised by the *Thebean* Legion; if it be true, at least what some Authors have written, all the Soldiers of that Legion were Christians. Now after they had pass'd the *Alps*, and were approaching near *Maximian*'s Army, they understood, that the Emperor, according to Custom, was resolv'd to make all his Soldiers swear Allegiance to him, upon an Altar consecrated to a Counterfeit Deity, and that they were to take an Oath contrary to the Impulses of their Consciences; which having oblig'd 'em to draw off in a Body from the rest of the Camp, *Maximian* sent

sent his Commands to 'em to come away and sacrifice to the Gods; to which *Mauricius*, Chief of that Legion, *Exuperus* and *Candidus*, answer'd, in the Name of all the rest, That they were all ready to fight against the Enemies of the Empire, but that they would never sacrifice to false Gods, nor act against their Brethren. *Maximian*, incens'd at this Answer, caus'd the whole Legion to be twice decimated, and every tenth Man to be put to death; but seeing that would do no good, but that the Soldiers still continu'd stedfast in their Profession of the Truth, he sent the whole Army against that single Legion, which surrounding 'em on every side, put 'em all to the Sword. And thus, with their Blood, they seal'd to that Truth, That loss of Life is to be preferr'd a thousand times before acting contrary to the Light of a Man's Conscience.

But in regard the Truth of this History is call'd in question, I shall produce another which is beyond all contradiction; which is the Story of *Julian*'s Soldiers. That Emperor had surpriz'd 'em, by ordaining that they should strow some Grains of Incense, before they received the Largess, which he was about to bestow upon 'em. Some of 'em being inform'd of the Fraud, the rest did innocently what was requir'd from 'em; but being told of the Fault which they had committed, they were not contented to come and cry out in the publick Market-place, *We are Christians; Jesus Christ our Lord, we have not renounced thee. If our Hand has committed a Crime, our Will has not consented.* But they came to the Emperor, and with exalted Voices, *Reserve*, said they, *our Gifts for*

for the Soldiers; sacrifice us to Jesus Christ who is our Monarch; burn us in the Place where we have strew'd the Incense; cut off our Hands that have committed so great a Crime, as to stretch themselves out upon your Altars. Distribute your Gold to those who are not sorry for having received it: Jesus Christ is sufficient for us, and supplies all our Wants. After this, they patiently and joyfully suffered death, every one of them, except one who was pardon'd by the Emperor, but who was very sorry that he had not the Honour to abrogate his Crime by the same Martyrdom which his Companions had undergone.

But, say they, does not St. *Paul* teach us, that we ought to submit our selves to Princes, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake. 'Tis very true; but it does not follow from thence, that Princes or Magistrates have any right over the Conscience, or that they have any Power to make us believe what they please. No body has any right over the Conscience, but only he that infus'd it into Men. This is that which has been acknowledged in all Ages. I could easily prove it, would I but collect together what has been written upon this Subject. I could cite the Fathers of the Church, *Tertullian*, *Lactantius*, St. *Hilary*, and St. *Athanasius*. I could also cite several Councils, as the Fourth Council of *Toledo*, in the Year 633. wherein there past a Decree in these words: As for the *Jews*, *The Synod has ordained, that from henceforth, no body shall be forced to believe. For God has compassion upon whom he will have mercy, and hardens whom he pleases; and People are not to be saved by force, but willingly;*

for

for the better observance of the outward form of Justice: For as Man lost himself by obeying the Serpent willingly, so is he also saved by believing, and turning to God when he calls him by his Grace. Let Persuasion therefore be made use of, and not Violence, to encline 'em to turn freely, and without any constraint. And the Archbishop of *Saville* loudly condemns that Prince, *who had constrain'd by his Power, those that ought to have been converted by Reason.* To which may be added that same Law, of which mention is made in the *African Codex* of M. *Justel*, by which every one is left at his liberty, whether he will embrace the Christian Religion, or not. I could also quote several Emperors: For example, the Emperor *Constantine*, who had decri'd that all his Subjects might be Christians, without constraining any body. The Emperor *Jovian*, who is applauded, for that he gave every body leave to profess what Religion he pleas'd. The Emperor *Valentinian*, who set forth Laws, by which he gave liberty to every body to profess the Religion wherein he was bred. The Emperor *Marcian*, who in the Letter which he wrote to the *Archimandrites*, and the Monks of *Jerusalem*, *We will not have*, says he, *or drag any Person, whoever he be, into the way of Truth, either by Threats, or by Violence:* And the Emperor *Constantine Pogonatus*, who in his Letter to the Bishop of *Rome*, upon occasion of the sixth Universal Council which he call'd at *Constantinople*, expressly says, *We could invite and exhort all the World to amend themselves, and unite with the Christians; but we will constrain no body.* 'Tis true, that *Charlemaigne* us'd violence towards the

the *Saxons*; but his Conduct is blam'd by *Alewin* his Tutor; as was also that of King *Chilperic*, by *Gregory* the First; and that of King *Sisebut* in *Spain*, by the Council of *Toledo*. Lastly, I could cite the Pagans themselves, who have been of the same Opinion, That no body has right over the Conscience, and that the Will is not to be forc'd, as appears by what was written by an *Indian* Philosopher to *Alexander*: *Thy Friends advise thee to offer violence to the* Indian *Philosophers: Thou mayst remove their Bodies from one place to another, but thou canst never force their Minds*, &c. *There is no Prince or King can make us do any thing against our Will.* This is a most certain Truth, and they who are of another Opinion, talk against the Light of their Understandings. Thus M. *le Bret*, Counsellor of State, in his Treatise of the King's Sovereignty, discussing the Question, Whether it be lawful sometimes to disobey the King? Answers, That in matters of Religion, there is no wavering to be admitted, between the Fear of God and Man. And he also maintains, That in austere and harsh Proceedings, the Minister of the Prince's Cruelties participates of his Crime; and that a Judge who pronounces an unjust Sentence, resolving upon Injustice, and condemns the Innocent upon Privy-Signet Letters, transgresses in his Obedience; because that being a Messenger of Justice, he never ought to abuse it, to colour over the Fury and Iniquity of a Prince, who borrows the Formalities of it. What think ye was the meaning of St. *Paul*, when he teaches us that we ought to submit to Princes, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake? No other

other, without queſtion, but that we ought to ſubmit to the higher Powers, in things which are not forbid by the Law of God; not only for Wrath, that is to ſay, becauſe there is no reſiſting 'em without puniſhment, and without incuring their Indignation, but alſo for Conſcience ſake; that is, becauſe the Word of God binds our Conſciences to it. For if we allow any greater latitude to the Words, it muſt be ſaid that St. *Paul* meant, that we ſhould ſacrifice to falſe Gods, if we liv'd under a Prince that ſhould command it. Which is that which no Man dares preſume to ſay; ſince no Man can be ignorant of the Opinion of that faithful *Servant of God* in this particular. We ſay no more of it here, becauſe we have already ſpoken concerning it.

CHAP. XX.

Againſt thoſe who believe it ſufficient to live according to the Rules of Moral Honeſty.

THere are many People, who believe it to be ſufficient to live well, but that 'twas no great matter what they believed; that it was enough to reform their Manners, but that there was no neceſſity of tormenting a Man's ſelf about his Belief, and that he may be ſav'd in all Sects, provided he abſtains from thoſe Vices which the Law of God and right Reaſon condemn. But they who are of this Opinion, are groſly miſtaken; nor will it be a difficult thing to evince 'em.

I. If it be ſufficient to lead an innocent Life, without ever troubling our ſelves what we ought to

to believe, 'tis a wonderful thing that Faith should be so often Recommended to us, and that the holy Men of God should declare, that without it there is no Salvation. *Amend your Lives*, says Christ; but at the same time, *believe in the Gospel. If thou believ'st*, said *Philip* to the Eunuch; and he answer'd, *I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If thou confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that God has rais'd him from the dead, thou shalt be sav'd. But without Faith it is impossible to please him. Heb.* 11. 6. *He that believeth in him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is already condemned; because he has not believ'd in the Name of the only begotten of God.* And this Faith is distinguish'd from good Works, as you may find in the *Epistles* to the *Romans*, the *Galatians*, and in other places. I confess, that Faith alone without Charity, is not sufficient to save. *Tho' I should speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, if I have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, and a tinkling Cymbal. And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. I confess also, that without Sanctification we cannot see God, *Heb.* 12. But I aver, in the first place, that there is no Sanctification, where there is no Faith. 'Tis Faith that purifies the Heart, Secondly, that Faith ought to have Charity for its Foundation; it ought to proceed, saith St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 5. *from a good Conscience, a pure Heart, and a Faith unfeigned.* Faith is dead without Charity; but there is no true Charity without Faith.

II.

II. If it be sufficient to live morally well, I cannot conceive wherefore St. *John*, 1 Epist. cap 4. would have us try the Spirits with so much care, to avoid the receiving all Doctrines that are taught us. *Beloved*, says he, *believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.* And for fear left Men should think that examination of the Spirits was recommended to 'em, only to try whether they taught a strict or loose Morality; the Apostle adds, *That every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is not of God; but this is that Spirit of Antichrist*, &c. If no Man then can be of God, unless he confess Christ come in the Flesh, certainly it cannot be sufficient to live morally well, to be sav'd; unless Men think they can obtain Salvation without being of God. Moreover, whence comes it that the same Apostle in his Second Epistle, forbids the Faithful to receive into their Houses, or to bid good speed to those that bring not the Doctrine of Christ, for it appears that he speaks of the same *Seducers*, who confess not that Jesus Christ was come in the Flesh. Wherefore is it that he would have us stand so strictly upon our Guards, when the Business in dispute is about the receiving a Doctrine, or not receiving it, if it were sufficient for a Man to correct his Manners to be sav'd.

III. I draw a third Argument from hence, that the Doctor of the Gentiles thunders out Anathema's against those that press the observation of the *Mosaick* Ceremonies, tho' they carefully enjoin'd the practice of the Moral Law. If it were sufficient to observe the Decalogue, would Christ

an Charity have allow'd St. *Paul* to Anathematize People who believ'd in Christ, only that they were *zealous of the Law*, Acts 21. 20. and who were only for joining *Moses* to *Jesus Christ*, the *Ceremonies* of the one, to the *Gospel* of the other.

IV. If this Opinion which we oppose were true, whence comes it that the *Scripture* condemns the Unbelievers to eternal Pains, *Apoc.* 21. 8. and that it excludes Idolaters out of the Kingdom of Heaven, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. There can be no other Reason given, but only because that living morally well, is not sufficient for the obtaining of eternal Salvation; but that it behoves us to believe those Truths which are taught us.

V. If living according to the Rules of Moral Honesty, were sufficient to bring a Man to Heaven, I would fain know the reason why the Apostles take so much pains to instruct People in the Truths of the Gospel, why do they keep such a stir to prove that Christ is the Promised *Messiah*, that they speak of his Divinity and his Cross, two things that equally stumbled both the Jews and the Gentiles? Had it not been sufficient to have taught 'em good Morality?

VI. Whence comes it to pass, that Christ and his Apostles so frequently exhorts us to suffer for the Truth; and that so many Persons have suffer'd Martyrdom in defence of the Truth, of which they might have been ignorant, if we may believe our Antagonists, without being depriv'd of Salvation. There would have been but very few Confessors and Martyrs, had Moral Honesty been sufficient to bring us to eternal Felicity.

To all these Proofs I add this important Reflection,

flection, that we draw from the Truths of the Gospel, which are propos'd to us, to the end we should believe 'em, the most powerful Motives that are able to engage us to Holiness. There is nothing more prevalent to incline Men to Sanctification, than to make known to 'em a God that loves Men to that degree, as to give 'em his only begotten Son; a God that abhors and detests Sin to that degree, that he rather chose to expose to Death his only Son, in whom he is well-pleased, than to leave Sin unpunished. A God that takes upon him human Nature, and under that Nature suffers a most cruel Death, to make an Atonement for the Sin of Men, and to satisfie Divine Vengeance, justly provok'd against 'em.

Lastly, A God that penetrates into the most secret Folds and Concealments of the Heart, who is to raise the Dead, and bring 'em to appear before his Throne, to give an account of all their Actions. It behoves us therefore to believe, if we will live well; and to believe and live well, if we intend to be sav'd.

CHAP. XXI.

That the Opinion of Indifferency in Religions has displeased almost all People.

THere remains nothing more for me, but only to answer an Argument which is attributed to the King of *Siam*, and which we have cited already in the third Chapter. 'The True God, 'said he, who created the Heaven and the Earth, 'and all the Creatures therein contain'd, and 'who has given 'em Natures and Inclinations so 'diffe-

different, had he so pleased, by giving Bodies and Souls alike to Men, could have inspir'd into 'em the same Sentiments, as to what Religion it behov'd 'em to follow; and have caus'd all Nations to agree and unite under one and the same Law. But it seems that Providence permits diversity of Sects, because God takes as much delight to be honour'd with different sorts of Worship, and various Ceremonies, as to be glorified by a prodigious Number of Creatures, the variety of whose Beauty's sets forth, and magnifies his Infinite Power.

There are some People who suffer themselves to be dazled with this Argument; but I beseech 'em to consider, that it may be prov'd as well, that God takes pleasure in the Sins which Men commit. For it might be said, that had God so pleased, by giving to Men Bodies and Souls alike, he might have infus'd into 'em the same Sentiments for Virtue; but that it seems as if he permitted the one to be Wise and Virtuous, the other to be very Vicious, because he takes delight in the variety of Humors and Inclinations. Now I am apt to believe there are very few that would approve such a Method of Arguing.

To this first Answer I may add two more. The first is, That there might be something plausible in this first Argument of the King of *Siam*, if God had not really made known to Men what it was that he requir'd 'em to believe, and what they were to do. But we have proved that he has reveal'd it to 'em, and that they need no more than read the Scripture with attention, and without prejudice, to understand which is the true Religion.

Th

The second Answer is, That this Argument is grounded upon a false Principle, that God might have inspir'd into all Men the same Sentiments of Religion, had he not taken delight in Variety. For God is not bound to make himself known alike to all Men. He is absolutely at his own liberty in all his Works. They to whom he has reveal'd himself, have no more cause to magnifie themselves than others; and they from whom he conceals himself, have no cause to complain.

Moreover, it is not to be imagined from the Opinion which the King of *Siam* seems to have concerning Indifferency in Religions, that this Sentiment derives it self naturally into the Thoughts of all Men. On the other side, it would be easie to prove, that the greatest part of Religions have condemned it.

The thing is clear in respect of the Christian Religion, nor is there any need of bringing further Proofs. The Pagans were so fix'd to their Old Opinions, that one of the most Learned Interpreters of *Virgil* observes, that great care was taken both among the *Athenians* and the *Romans* that no body introduc'd New Religions. For that Reason it was, that *Socrates* was condemn'd at *Athens*, that the Jews were expell'd *Rome*, and that the Books of *Numa* were burnt.

Josephus reports, that the *Athenians* inflicted grievous Punishments upon those that introduc'd new Deities, and durst presume so much as to speak against their Law. *Dionysius* of *Halicarnassus* asserts, that not only the *Greeks*, but all the *Barbarians* carefully preserv'd the Religion of their Ancestors; and the same thing is reported

nt of the *Scythians* and *Persians*. Nevertheless, we
ight will not deny what *Socrates* said, that it was law-
ental for every body to serve the Deity, according
iety to the Custom of the Country, and that foreign
ow Gods were often transported to *Rome* and *Athens*.
owbut give us leave to make these three Remarks.
e ha. That the Testimony of *Socrates* is of no weight,
nis because he was condemned at *Athens*. 2. That
n the greatest part of those Deities which were
ransported to *Rome*, were removed out of the
th Cities which the *Romans* had besieg'd, and were
avy the Priest invited, before the whole Army,
th to the Capital of all *Italy*, where they should have,
this they said, more Temples, more Sacrifices, and
oul more Adorers. To which we may add, that
el they were therefore removed, because it was an
Opinion among 'em, that all Places had their Tu-
tia elar Deities, and that they could not take Ci-
ties, till after they had removed the Gods that
ei protected 'em. 3. That those Gods which were
In carried to *Rome*, *Athens*, and other places, and
wa those that were there worshipped under the Cha-
an racter of *unknown Gods*, are sufficient Proofs, that
Fo some Accident fell out, of which they believ'd
n' some Deity, that was *unknown* to 'em, to be the
in Author; and make it appear that the *Romans* were
of Opinion, that the more Gods they had in their
te Cities, the more Protectors they had. But from
c' thence it does not follow, that the *Athenians* and
t *Romans* believ'd, that all Religions were Indiffe-
ar rent. For had they so thought, why did they
li prosecute so cruelly the Christians and the Jews?
d It is certain also, that they derided those new
e Gods that were introduc'd, as appears by the
a Come-

[illegible] *Brachmans*. To which I may [illegible] the *Bramiry* [illegible] the *Indians*, who are the [illegible] *Brachmans*, believe that every body may [illegible] in his own Religion, provided he fol[illegible] exactly the way that God has shewed him, [illegible] that he shall be damn'd if he pursues any [illegible]ther.

As for the *Mahometans*, 'tis very true, that *Ma*[illegible] seems to favour Indifferency in Religion, [illegible] he says in his *Alcoran*, that every Man who [illegible] well, who worships the true God, and does [illegible] Works, whether Christian or Jew, obtains [illegible] Favour of his God. Nevertheless, 'tis cer[illegible], that in another place he asserts, that the [illegible] is the only way of Salvation, and ordains [illegible] Religion to be established in the World by [illegible] of Arms. Indeed, it would be a kind of [illegible], that the *Mahometans* should think, that [illegible] Christians could be saved, seeing that the Christians aver *Mahomet* to be an Impostor, and daily beg of God, that the same false Prophet may have no more Followers, but that his Reli[illegible] may be rooted out from the Earth. Moreover, [illegible] well known, that the *Turks* openly condemn [illegible] *Persians*; which they would never do, if they thought all Religions were indifferent.

As for the *Jews*, the thing is so certain, that [illegible] who questions it, must never have read their [illegible]ritings; for they continually curse the Chri[illegible]ns, and are so obstinately persuaded of the [illegible]th of their Religion, nay more, that it is the [illegible] true Religion in the World; that there have [illegible] several who have rather chosen to die, than [illegible] the meanest P[illegible] of their Law.

THE END.